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THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER:

BEING THIRTY-EIGHT

DISCOURSES

UPON THE

PRINCIPAL HEADS

OF

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

Designed for the Use of Families.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By JOHN EVANS, D. D.

To which is prefixed

SOME

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE.

VOL. II.

As the Servants of Christ doing the Will of God from the Heart.—Ephes. vi. 6.

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SER-

SERMON I.

Preference of the soul to the body, and diligence for its welfare.

JOHN vi. 27. the former part.

Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.

ST. Paul, summing up the duty which we are taught by the grace of God in the Gospel, expresses that to ourselves, Tit. ii. 12. by living soberly or with a sound mind, as the word σοφρόνως signifies. We consist of body and mind; but by this we are especially directed to see that our mind be in a sound state. The powers of the mind are vastly superior to those of the body; and they were designed by our great Creator to sit at helm over the whole man. Now to live with a sound mind, is to conduct ourselves as those who have an intelligent spirit to preside in body, to direct and govern the whole.

The apostacy hath inverted this order, set the inferior powers in the throne, and inslaved the mind to the body; so that the appetites and passions we have by occasion of the body have the most commanding influence; the interests

tereſts of the meaner part are apt to be moſt regarded; and reaſon, and the higher powers, inſtead of giving law, receive law from appetite, and are preſſed into its ſervice to miniſter to it.

Chriſtianity is deſigned to bring us to ourſelves, or to our right mind; to reinſtate the reaſonable ſpirit in its juſt empire over the whole man. And in this view we may eaſily diſcern the ſeveral branches of the temper becoming us, with reference to ourſelves.

We owe it to ourſelves in the firſt place to prefer the intereſts of our immortal ſouls before thoſe of our periſhing bodies: Which is only to form a right judgment upon comparing the different value of ſoul and body.

Hereupon we ſhould exerciſe care and diligence to ſecure our beſt intereſts, and anſwerable to their ſuperior value and excellence; in oppoſition to negligence and ſloth.

And as we ſhould judge fairly between our own higher and lower intereſts, ſo we ſhould make a juſt eſtimate of ourſelves compared with other beings; not thinking of ourſelves above what we ought to think: And that will lead us to humility.

We ſhould regulate our bodily appetites and paſſions conformable to the dictates of reaſon, and the higher intereſts of our ſouls. This will be done by the graces of purity, and temperance, and meekneſs. And laſtly,

We ought to moderate our deſires after any preſent good, and our reſentment of preſent evils to the body, according to the neceſ-

ſity

fity of our lot, and the reaſons which religion gives to qualify both. And this is done by what we call contentment and patience.

For the two firſt of theſe duties to to ourſelves, preferring the intereſts of the ſoul to thoſe of the body, and ſuitable pains and diligence to ſecure thoſe our principal intereſts; our Saviour in the text calls us to act in that manner.

The occaſion of the words was this. Chriſt had miraculouſly fed five thouſand men with five loaves and two fiſhes. The people, ſtruck with admiration, concluded that Jeſus was "that prophet that ſhould come into the world," i. e. the promiſed Meſſiah, ver. 14. but having their minds full of the notion which generally prevailed among the Jews at that time, that the Meſſiah was to ſet up a temporal kingdom; they immediately attempted to take him by force, and make him king. But Chriſt withdrew himſelf from them, ver. 15. His diſciples went by ſhip to the oppoſite ſhore, and Chriſt miraculouſly walking on the ſea followed his diſciples unknown to the people. The people however eagerly purſue him, where they thought it moſt likely to meet with him; and finding him, ſay, "Rabbi, when cameſt thou hither?" ver. 25. Chriſt, who knew their inſincerity, and the baſe reaſon which induced them to follow him, plainly tells them of it, ver. 26. "Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, ye ſeek me, not becauſe ye ſaw the miracles, but becauſe ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." "You do not follow me in purſuit of the true

"end

" end for which I work my miracles, that you " may be made willing to learn of me the way " that leads to everlasting life; but merely in " the hope of receiving some temporal bene- " fit from me, as you have lately done, when " you found your bodies fully refreshed by " the loaves and fishes."

Thereupon he gives them the exhortation in the text: " Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." " Be not so much con- " cerned, nor take so much pains as you do, " to obtain those things which may support a " frail and dying body; or for any outward " and secular advantage, which will be ser- " viceable to you but a little time: But rath- " er labour for the food of souls, which will " make you happy forever, and which I the " Son of man am ready to give you. You " have followed me for the sake of the loaves: " You should much rather follow me to re- " ceive the instructions which I am able and " ready to grant, whereby you will be made " wise unto salvation."

Three general heads will comprehend all that is necessary to be said upon this subject.

I. All care and pains for the interest of our bodies is not forbidden. But,

II. The interest of our souls, and all which subserves that, ought greatly to be preferred before the other.

III. Much labour and diligence are necessary in order to the securing of our everlasting interest.

I. All care and pains for the welfare of our bodies,

bodies, and for promoting our present interests, is not forbidden.

It may possibly seem to be so by the absolute way of speaking; "Labour not for the meat which perisheth." But the sense of this is familiar to such as observe the manner of the Hebrew style; which often appears to forbid one thing and to command another absolutely, when it is plain that no more is intended, than that one should be done more than the other. Neither all *looking at the things which are seen*, nor all *affection to things on earth*, nor *laying up treasure on earth*, are unlawful, though in the way of speaking they may seem to be absolutely excluded, 2 Cor. iv. 18. Col. iii. 2. Matth. vi. 19. But we must consider them, as set over against what is mentioned on the other hand along with them, and understand the whole taken together in a comparative sense. We should look not so much at the things which are seen, as at the things which are not seen; and not set our affections on things on earth, so much as on things above: Nor be so solicitous for earthly treasure, as to lay up treasure in heaven. And so we must understand the text.

For we ought to labour for the meat which perisheth.

Our bodies, while we sojourn in them, claim a part of our care. "No man," acting worthy of a man, "hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it." The law of nature, and the word of God, oblige us to honest industry in our lawful callings and stations for the support of ourselves and our families.

families. God has so ordered it in the course of his providence for the generality of mankind, that "in the sweat of their face they must eat bread till they return to the ground," Gen. iii. 19. And if any, on pretence of attending to the care of their souls, should neglect their secular business, either expecting God's providential care of them, or that other people should relieve them; in truth they tempt God, and injure their neighbour. The Apostle gives them the character of "disorderly walkers, who work not at all;" and "commands and exhorts them by the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread," 2 Thess. iii. 11, 12. To be diligent in our outward affairs in the the proper time of attendance upon them, is as truly serving God and obeying his commands, as attending his immediate worship in the proper season for that. It is as much the command of God, "six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work," that ordinarily the greatest part of common days should be taken up in our proper callings; as that we should lay aside secular business for one day in seven. This will no way interfere with a daily acknowledgment of God morning and evening in secret and family worship; for which a little prudent forecast will redeem sufficient time from business. Nor need it prevent some attendance on occasional means of public instruction on week-days; which may easily be so managed, if you have really a mind to it, that your outward affairs shall not suffer by it.

To

To have a lawful employment, and to be diligent in it, will preſerve from many hurtful temptations. This is peculiarly deſirable to employ the activity of youth, who are led into a thouſand ſnares by want of buſineſs or want of application to it. And for that reaſon ſuch as have the direction of young people, ſhould take care that they be engaged betimes in ſome way of employing themſelves ſuitable to their genius and circumſtances. And in ſuch a way it will be the wiſdom and intereſt of young people to walk with God.

Nor is it unworthy of a Chriſtian, to make his temporal intereſt, and even the advancement of his worldly circumſtances above what they are at his ſetting out in the world, a ſubordinate end of his labour and diligence. If it had been unlawful to propoſe ſuch an end, induſtry would not have been encouraged by ſuch declarations as theſe: that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich," Prov. x. 4. and "ſhall bear rule," chap. xii. 24. that "the thoughts of the diligent tend only to pleaſantneſs," chap. xxi. 5. that ſuch a one "ſhall ſtand before kings," and "not before mean men," chap. xxii. 29. Religion does not abſolutely forbid us to aim at thoſe ends by our diligence, which it gives us ſome encouragement to expect as the conſequence of it. Certainly a man may lawfully and commendably labour to obtain any worldly good, which he may come fairly by, without breaking any known law of God, or injuring his neighbour, or neglecting his ſoul.

But our Saviour deſigns to teach us, that

II. The intereſt of our ſouls, and all which promotes that, deſerves to be far preferred before any intereſts of the body. Chriſt here ſets both before us in a comparative view; and the expreſſions he uſes, not only ſerve to diſtinguiſh theſe different concerns, but ſufficiently intimate the reaſon of preferring the one to the other; when he deſcribes the one as "the meat which periſheth," and the other as "that which endureth unto everlaſting life." The Goſpel often gives us this comparative view of both, 2 Cor. iv. 18. "The things which are ſeen are temporal; but the things which are not ſeen are eternal." So Chriſt expreſſes himſelf to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 13, 14. "Whoſoever drinketh of this water ſhall thirſt again: but whoſoever drinketh of the water that I ſhall give him, ſhall never thirſt; but the water that I ſhall give him, ſhall be in him a well of water ſpringing up into everlaſting life."

1. All that is for the ſuſtenance and welfare of the body, has the character of the "meat that periſheth." Which is apt enough to expreſs the following things, which juſtly depreciate all worldly good, and yet are proved to be true by daily experience.

Every-preſent enjoyment may be loſt. Though it be ever ſo comfortable, ever ſo ſuitable, we hold it by no certain tenure. Whatever advantage riches may give us, they may "take themſelves wings, and fly away:" And ſhall we then "ſet our eyes upon that which is not?" Prov. xxiii. 5.

5. All earthly treaſures are periſhable things:

things: Some of them *moth and ruſt may corrupt;* for others, the *thief* may *break through and ſteal* them from us. Matth. vi. 19. Devouring flames may conſume a large and liberal ſubſtance, and reduce a man in a few hours from very plentiful circumſtances to extreme neceſſity. Or if people ſhould imagine themſelves ſecure in an inheritance, a ſmall obſervation of human life may ſhew, that this cannot abſolutely be depended upon; for fraud or violence may turn a man out of that which appeared the firmeſt poſſeſſion. Health is as uncertain as riches. When it ſeems moſt confirmed, it is not proof againſt the aſſaults of ſickneſs or pain. All the prudence of precaution, and all the ſkill of the phyſician, cannot aſcertain to us this greateſt of outward comforts. Every member of the body, every bone, and joint, and ſinew, lies open to many unknown diſorders; and we cannot always prevent thoſe diſorders from coming upon us as an armed man. If we are exalted to the higheſt honours, an exchange of them for the loweſt abaſement, and the moſt general contempt, is no uncommon ſtep in life. The rich man is frequently reduced to poverty, the healthy man laid upon a bed of languiſhing; and the man who ſtood in the firſt rank of dignity, is ſoon debaſed in his character and influence. So periſhing, ſo changeable is all worldly good.

The uſe and comfort of worldly enjoyments may be loſt while the things themſelves continue. In that reſpect they are periſhing. Some of them are no more than a tranſient pleaſure,

pleaſure, ſuch as periſhes with the uſing: It is well if they are followed with no laſting ſting, ſuch as makes a dear reckoning for a momentary delight. That is certainly the caſe in all unlawful ſenſualities. And thoſe external delights, which are moſt innocent, in a little time, upon a man's being accuſtomed to them, leave him empty, unleſs he can make ſome new experiment for happineſs. "The eye is not ſatisfied with ſeeing, nor the ear filled with hearing," Eccl. i. 8. New circumſtances and new wants, which are not provided for by what we have already, will ſupercede the comfort and uſe of preſent enjoyments. Pain and ſickneſs will take off the reliſh of riches, or honours, or pleaſure, and eſpecially a wounded ſpirit, whether ariſing from bodily melancholy, or from the ſtrong temptations of Satan, or from the arrows of God ſtuck faſt in the ſoul, will imbitter all enjoyments at once.

The body itſelf, to which alone ſuch comforts are ſuited, is periſhing. It is ever tending towards the duſt, and will ſoon be ſtripped of all ſenſation and ſuitableneſs to the things that are in the world. What are they all to a dead carcaſe? That will entirely loſe the reliſh of things once moſt agreeable. This is the caſe of us all; we are going down to the ſilent grave, and can carry none of thoſe things along with us to be of any ſervice in the ſtate whither we are going. All their pleaſure and uſe, if it ſhould happen to laſt ſo long, muſt have its period with the ſtroke of death.

On

On the other hand,

II. That which ſerves the intereſt of our ſouls, is of the moſt durable uſe. It is "meat that endureth to everlaſting life." Chriſt here compares bodily food with his own inſtructions, which were ſufficient to make men wiſe unto ſalvation. Theſe are often in ſcripture repreſented by the emblem of food, Prov. ix. 5. "Wiſdom crieth in the ſtreets; come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled." Which is explained ver. 6. "by going in the way of underſtanding." And Iſa. lv. 2. "Eat you that which is good, and let your ſoul delight itſelf in fatneſs." Which is expreſſed in plainer words, ver. 3. "Hear and your ſouls ſhall live."

This food of ſouls is ſaid to endure to everlaſting life. Not that the means of grace will laſt always: If we could enjoy them in the future world, the folly would not be ſo great in neglecting them at preſent; but their continuance is of ſo ſhort a date as that of the meat that periſheth. This tranſitory life, and all ſuch opportunities muſt end together. All that is intended, is, that the benefit and happy fruits of them will be eternal, if they are carefully and conſcientiouſly improved now.

This is the argument which our Lord intimates to induce us, while we are probationers, to prefer the intereſts of our ſouls, and the means of their welfare, before thoſe concerns which are terminated within the preſent life and world. And to ſhew the force of it, I would lay together the following conſiderations.

1 We have immortal ſouls, as well as periſhing bodies. A part within us, which has no tendency to corruption and diſſolution, as the earthly houſe of this tabernacle hath; but is deſigned and framed by our great Creator to ſubſiſt forever. When the body returns to the duſt, the ſpirit returns to God that gave it, and is adjudged by him to endleſs happineſs or miſery. The wiſer Heathens by natural light made ſome diſcovery of this; but we have more abundant evidence of it by revelation; that we are ſpirits dwelling in houſes of clay, of which God is immediately the father, as men are the fathers of our fleſh. Theſe will not ceaſe to be or to act, to feel pleaſure or pain, to bear the wrath, or enjoy the favour of God, when their preſent dwellings ſhall become uninhabitable. Immediately upon death they either are in torments, or go to paradiſe; either become the companions of devils, or the aſſociates of holy angels; and ſo remain for ever. The faſhion of the world paſſeth away; one generation goes off the ſtage, and another comes on; there is a continual ſucceſſion of perſons and things below; the viſible heavens and this earth ſhall in time be diſſolved: but God hath taken care to aſſure us by reaſon and ſcripture, that we have ſouls deſigned for eternity.

2. Our ſtate hereafter will be determined by our behaviour here. Heaven or hell, happineſs or miſery, will be our final portion, juſt as death finds us; whether in Chriſt, or out of him; dead in ſin, or become alive to God:

God: For we are to "receive hereafter the things done in the body, whether good or bad," 2 Cor. 5. 10. "God will render to every man according to his deeds; To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath;" Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8. Even since the apostacy, by the grace of God, life as well as death is set before us, and we are allowed our choice. We may either "after our hardiness and impenitent hearts, treasure up unto ourselves wrath against the day of wrath," or we may "lay up treasure in heaven; lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation," or security "for the time to come, that we may lay hold of eternal life." This is all our sowing time; and "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of his flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. vi. 7, 8.

3. We are often determined in the affairs of this life by the hope and fear of things to come, where we have far less certainty. All our pursuits, and I may say most of our actions, are for the sake of something future, and not yet in sight; either to prevent some evil feared, or to obtain some good desired, which are both futurities. In the beginning of life people apply themselves to become masters of some of the learned professions, or of some trade or business, in hope of a livelihood

hood or of ſerviceableneſs when they arrive at maturity: but they are not ſure they ſhall ever live to be maſters of buſineſs themſelves. Thoſe who are entered upon the world, purſue their ſeveral buſineſſes in expectation that they will anſwer their end; but they are not certain of ſucceſs in the moſt prudent ſteps they can take. In the affairs of our ſouls we act upon a future proſpect; but divine promiſe aſcertains us of ſucceſs in the way of the Goſpel. That the benefit is future, is no reaſon therefore to abate our zeal in proſecuting it; that is the caſe in our aims of this world: And we have the advantage of a better hope in our aims for another.

4. It is a plain rule of wiſdom, that we ſhould decline a preſent pleaſure for one equal to it of longer continuance; or that we ſhould ſubmit to a preſent inconvenience, to prevent one more laſting, or to obtain a more laſting good. We juſtly eſteem it wiſdom to act in this manner, though their ſhould be no difference in the things themſelves, but only in the continuance. Would a man be wiſe in refuſing to go through a ſhort courſe of phyſic, in an ill condition of body, upon a fair proſpect of a regular ſtate of health after it? Or in neglecting to give a ſmall ſum of money in hand, upon ſecurity of enjoying a good inheritance in a little time?

Now the moſt laſting things below, bear no tolerable proportion to the future ſtate. There is no room for meaſuring them with eternity. A minute compared with our whole lives, or even with the whole duration of the world,

world, is no disproportion in comparison of that between time and eternity. We lose all our thoughts, and stretch beyond the power of numbers, in that one word, Eternity: For go as far on as you can, add millions of years to millions, and yet you are never the nearer to an end; an unfathomable depth is still behind. Now the state of all men at death is fixed forever. Can we think of this, and find any pretence to prefer present things to future? Shall we prefer a minute's satisfaction, to lose an eternity of joys, or sink into an eternity of woe? Shall we refuse *the light afflictions*, which providence may call us to bear in the way of our duty, *which are but for a moment*, when they *work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

5. Whatever is temporal, for that very reason is incapable of giving full satisfaction. It is a great abatement of the pleasure of any enjoyment, to think that it may be lost. In truth the more pleasant it is, so much the more afflicting will be thought of parting. Heaven itself would not satisfy the possessors, if they had the prospect of an end. This arises from the natural principle of self-love, which necessitates our wishing for the continuance of that which is agreeable. When we are all therefore upon an enquiry after happiness, we may discern at first, that Earth says, it is not in me; for every thing here is perishing, and must soon be at a period.

6. The eternal continuance of happiness is one of the most satisfying characters of it; and the eternity of misery the most bitter ingredient

gredient in it. As it is impoſſible to be perfectly happy with the proſpect of an end before one; ſo this one conſideration would magnify inferior delights, to think that we ſhould never be deprived of them: And light afflictions, the aching of a tooth or finger, with eternity written upon them, would be an inſupportable burden. What ſhall we think then of perfect happineſs and compleat miſery, both of the higheſt kind, and both eternal? If we were not acquainted with the excellent nature of the heavenly joys; yet as long as we are told of this qualification of them, that they never end, we might be ſure that happineſs is to be found there or no where. But when we are fully aſſured, how great the happineſs is, and that it is of everlaſting duration, it muſt be the moſt unreaſonable thing of all others to prefer any preſent good before it.

With what force and evidence then ſhould that queſtion come upon all our conſciences, "What is a man profited, if he ſhould gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?" Mat. xvi. 26.

A third general head yet remains to be conſidered.

III. Labour and diligence are indiſpenſably neceſſary, in order to the ſecuring of our beſt intereſts. Faint deſires and tranſient reſolutions will not be ſufficient in this caſe, but we muſt labour for the meat that endureth to everlaſting life. "The ſoul of the ſluggard deſireth, and hath not."

Here

Here I ſhall ſhew wherein our labour is to be exerciſed, and then the neceſſity of it.

Firſt, Wherein labour for our ſouls is to be exerciſed.

1. In the diligent uſe of all appointed means of life. Some pains are needful even to keep up a ſtated attendance on them; to fall in with every proper opportunity for reading and hearing, for meditation and prayer, and for communicating at the Lord's table. Some, by reaſon of the ſtraitneſs of their worldly circumſtances, are obliged to a cloſer attention to their ſecular buſineſs for a livelihood, than others are; and therefore they may be neceſſitated to redeem ſome time from their ſleep or their recreations for the more immediate ſervice of God, and care of their ſouls. Others may live at a greater diſtance from public worſhip, and ſo be obliged to ſome bodily fatigue to attend upon it: "In their heart" ſhould be "the ways of them who paſſing through the valley of Beca, made it a well," Pſal. lxxxiv. 5, 6. This is a deſcription of ſuch, who living remote from Jeruſalem, yet out of love to the temple-worſhip, and in obedience to God, who enjoined all the males to come up to it at certain times, paſſed chearfully through the dry and deſert valley of Beca, as if it had been plentifully furniſhed with wells for their refreſhment by the way. Happy they, who ſo love the habitation of God's houſe, or his public ordinances, as to be content to paſs through ſome difficulties, rather than omit an attendance on them.

But

But much more labour and pains are needful with our own hearts in religious duties, to fix our attention, excite proper affections, and exercise that humility and reverence, that seriousness and fervency, without which the outward performance will be of little service to our souls. A careless temper of mind in our use of appointed means is most unsuitable to God, and renders them useless to our best interests. But good men are sensible, that it is no easy matter to secure their thoughts from wandering, to raise pious and devout affections, or keep them up, to exercise faith, or love, or self-abasement, or any other grace suitable to the work in which they are engaged. They find by experience no small occasion for care and conflict, for pains and application, both before and in holy duties, to perform them to advantage. And certainly, if we consider them as the means of our salvation, we shall not think those pains unnecessary, without which they cannot be spiritual sacrifices, either acceptable to God, or profitable to ourselves.

2. In opposing the enemies and difficulties which are in our way. As we must enter upon religion with a prospect of difficulties, and a resolution to adhere to God in defiance of all; so we cannot maintain our ground, and acquit ourselves like Christians, without labour and diligence; to resist the Devil in all his known assaults, to overcome the world in its ensnaring influence, and to mortify the irregular inclinations of our own hearts. Beside that we may be called to sufferings for righteousness

teouſneſs ſake, which will occaſion no ſmall conflict between nature and grace, notwithſtanding all to "run with patience the race that is ſet before us."

3. In making continued advances toward the perfect day. "The path of the juſt ſhineth more and more unto that day," Prov. iv. 18. He who hath his heart really fixed upon heaven, never thinks himſelf ſufficiently mete for it, but ſtill endeavours a progreſs. Now this calls for conſtant application and diligence. 2 Pet. i. 5. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue," &c. We muſt ſtill continue to "cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit, and to perfect holineſs in the fear of God." As a man of letters, who has a true reliſh for learning, never thinks he has learning enough; ſo a Chriſtian in his labours for everlaſting life, is never ſatisfied with preſent attainments, but would abound more and more. You have a noble inſtance of this, and of inceſſant labour thereupon, in Paul. Though he had attained much, yet he forgot what was behind, and reached forth to apprehend more; ſtill preſſing forward, and bounding his deſires and ambition by nothing ſhort of the reſurrection of the dead, Phil. iii. 10. &c. We ſhould copy after that pattern.

Secondly, The neceſſity of labour and pains as it plainly appears from the caſes wherein it is to be exerciſed; ſo might be made evident in many other ways. I ſhall only mention two.

I. It might be concluded from the neceſſi-

ty of labour to the securing of our present interests. What is there valuable in this world, ordinarily to be obtained without pains? And can it be thought, that heaven, the greatest blessing of all, should become our portion at unawares? Must we labour for the meat that perisheth, and can we flatter ourselves that the meat that endures to everlasting life can be had without labour? It is indeed an argument that present things have the ascendant in our practical judgment, if we can allow ourselves in such a thought.

2. We have the plainest declarations of God in the present case. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able," Luke xiii. 24. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," Phil. ii. 12. The promise is made only "to him that overcometh;" which cannot be done without pains and labour, while there is a devil to assault, corrupt hearts to oppose our better inclinations, and many difficulties to be encountered. The conduct of those who are heirs of the heavenly country, is described in Scripture by the most indefatigable pains that are laid out about any thing in the world; by the incessant labour of the husbandman, the continual progress of a traveller, the painful exercises of a soldier, the diligent application of a merchant, the toil of a race. Thus good men in all ages have found their way to glory; though the farther progress they made, and the clearer views they had of the prize before them, so much the more easy and pleasant they accounted their work to be. And

And now be perſuaded to bring all this home to your conſciences by a perſonal application.

1. Seriouſly examine whether the care of your ſouls or of your bodies has had the preference with you to this day. I mean not, whether you have never had convictions that your ſouls deſerve the preference, nor whether you are not ready to acknowledge this in diſcourſe; but which in fact you have practically ſet the main value upon? What things are you moſt afraid of? Thoſe which are detrimental to your bodies, or to your ſouls? i. e. in other words, which do you moſt fear, ſin or ſuffering? On the other hand, which gives you moſt pleaſure? That your bodies proſper and are in health, that your eſtates increaſe, that your families flouriſh, that you have ſucceſs in your buſineſs? or that you can have reaſon to hope that your ſouls proſper, that the divine life improves in them, that you gain ſome advance in the mortification of irregular appetites and paſſions, that holy ordinances are more pleaſant and profitable to you? Eſpecially how do you behave upon a competition between the intereſts of both? Which intereſt are you determined to maintain and abide by, when you find you muſt quit the one for the ſake of the other? Put ſuch queſtions as theſe to yourſelves, and allow conſcience to make a faithful report.

2. If the intereſts of your ſouls have hitherto been ſhamefully neglected, allow me to expoſtulate with you in the appoſite words of the prophet, Iſa. lv. "Wherefore do ye

ſpend

ſpend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which ſatisfieth not?"

Why do you mainly purſue that which you know cannot ſatisfy, when you may obtain an infinitely greater good? If "the meat that periſheth" was the beſt you had in view, there might be ſome pretence to ſay, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," and we have no views beyond that: but when we may inherit ſubſtance, ſhall we act with indifference for that, and employ all our pains for that which hath vanity written upon it by the word of God, by the teſtimony of the wiſeſt men, and by our own frequent experience.

Why ſhould you ſpend more for preſent good, than it is worth? Should you throw away your immortal ſouls for it, when nothing can be given in exchange for your ſouls?

Why ſhould you make ſo diſadvantageous a bargain, after frequent warnings given you of it by a compaſſionate Saviour, and thoſe who ſpeak in his name? after many diſappointments in your own moſt raiſed expectations from the things of time?

Why ſhould you employ your excellent talents ſo ill, when they are plainly given you for a better uſe? The ſpirit of a beaſt would have been ſufficient for the employment and happineſs of a beaſt: But when your Maker has given you a capacity of looking forward to immortality, of judging between the value of things preſent and future, of chuſing and proſecuting your beſt intereſts; when you have ſuch noble powers, you muſt account

not

not only to yourſelves, but to your Maker alſo, for your uſage of your ſouls, of yourſelves. And certainly you can give no good account either to God or yourſelves, for neglecting the one thing needful. And once more,

Why ſhould you neglect your ſouls for the ſake of your bodies, when in the ordinary ſtate of things you may comfortably mind both? When a regular care of your ſouls will admit of all reaſonable concern for your outward welfare too; and will give you a better ſecurity than you can have any other way, for all that is needful and good for you in this life? "Seek ye firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs; and all theſe things ſhall be added to you," Matth vi. 33. And by ſecuring the future happineſs of your ſouls, you provide for the everlaſting glory and felicity of your bodies too in the morning of the reſurrection. Therefore,

3. Be perſuaded to make everlaſting life your governing aim through the preſent life, and not only a concern on the bye. When Chriſt is come into the world to ſeek and ſave loſt ſouls; when your time below is principally given you to mind their intereſt; when the many dangers attending them require your earneſt application to prevent their ruin; be in earneſt here, wherever elſe you allow yourſelves to trifle. I may happily add for your encouragement in this caſe, what you cannot be aſſured of in the moſt diligent and prudent labours for the meat that periſheth; that you ſhall not fail of ſucceſs. "Therefore, my

beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58.

SERMON II.

Christian Humility.

Col. iii. 12. middle of the verse.

——*Humbleness of mind.*

The whole verse runs thus,

Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, *meekness, long-suffering.*

THE first instance of being wise for ourselves, is to put the principal value upon that part of ourselves which is most noble and durable, our souls; and to use our main diligence for securing their welfare. It is another branch of wisdom, to make a right estimate of ourselves, compared with other beings, either above us, or or the same order with ourselves. Christian humility is the very temper to which such a thought will lead us. And that is to be our present subject.

St. Paul in the 9th and 10th verses of this chapter, expresses his charitable hope of the Colossians,

Coloſſians, that they had "put off the old man with his deeds; and had put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him:" and hereupon in the text and ſome following verſes, enumerates ſeveral particular excellencies, which are parts of the new man; and therefore he exhorts theſe Coloſſians to put them on.

If any ſhould ſay, Since the apoſtle had already ſuppoſed that they had put them on, why does he yet exhort them to do ſo; eſpecially why does he therefore exhort them to it? The anſwer is plain. His charitable hope was founded upon their avowed profeſſion of chriſtianity, which was in other words a profeſſion to have put on the new man: he therefore juſtly exhorts them to ſhew that this their profeſſion was ſincere and genuine, and his hopes concerning them well founded, by all the actual and proper expreſſions of a renewed diſpoſition. Or, ſuppoſing them to have been undoubtedly renewed already, yet there would be room for improvement and advance in every part of the chriſtian temper; and therefore they ſhould ſtill put on the new man more and more, daily grow in the ſtrength and activity, and juſt expreſſions of every holy diſpoſition. Among theſe, "humbleneſs of mind," our preſent ſubject, is reckoned up for one.

My buſineſs ſhall be, I. To explain the nature of this holy temper. And, II. To ſhew the ſpecial obligations which lie upon us as Chriſtians to cultivate it.

I. I would

I. I would explain the nature of this temper, or ſhew wherein true humility of mind conſiſts.

The word ταπεινοφροσυνη, which is here and in ſeveral other places of the New Teſtament uſed to expreſs this chriſtian virtue, ſignifies in general a low apprehenſion or eſteem: and from the ſcope of the places, though the word does not directly expreſs ſo much, it muſt mean a low apprehenſion or eſteem of ourſelves. I think the apoſtle's exhortation in Rom. xii. 3. is a natural paraphraſe upon that in the text; "I ſay, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think; but to think ſoberly." It ſtands directly oppoſed to pride and arrogance. Generally the word is uſed in ſcripture in a good ſenſe; but twice in one chapter of this epiſtle in a bad one, Col. ii. 18. 23. for a baſe and unworthy ſubjection of mind; which ſhews, that there is occaſion to guard againſt miſtakes in this matter, as well as to illuſtrate the excellent temper deſigned to be expreſſed by it.

It is farther to be obſerved, that the word leads us to conſider it principally as a diſpoſition of mind; ſuitable to the ſcheme I am upon. There may be a ſeeming humility of outward expreſſion and behaviour, which covers a very proud heart. But Chriſtians are called to put on "humbleneſs of mind," and not only a humble demeanor; though humility in the heart will certainly produce the proper fruits in the behaviour.

The

The actings of this temper will be best discerned in a relative view, as we entertain a humble opinion of ourselves, compared either with God or with our fellow creatures. And the description of it, as well as the distinguishing of it from what is unworthy and unbecoming, may I think, naturally fall under the following particulars.

1. A humble apprehension of our own knowledge. "Knowledge," St. Paul observes, "puffeth up;" is very apt to do so, 1 Cor. viii. 1. There is nothing which men are more ready to be proud of, and to think better of themselves in beyond desert. Many would sooner bear a reflection upon their moral character, than upon their understandings. One would think the serpent was early sensible that this was man's weak side, when he made use of that artifice to seduce our first parents, to assure them, that if they would but follow his counsel, "they should be as Gods, knowing good and evil," Gen. iii. 5. and we may remember what an unhallowed flame this kindled in their inclination. And though they soon had sad evidence of the falsehood and folly of the suggestion; yet notwithstanding so clear a confutation, there is no part of original sin, which they seem to have derived more universally and more strongly to their posterity, than a proud surmise that they have gained what the Devil then promised. No branch of pride hath more need of a cure, though indeed none hath less to support it, than conceit of our own knowledge. "Vain man would be wise," and would

would be esteemed wise, "though he be born like the wild ass's colt," Job xi. 12.. Now the beginning of humility, and indeed of true wisdom, lies in moderating our conceit of our own sufficiency this way. And so it will include,

(1.) A sense of the natural imperfection of our faculties. There is indeed a dignity in our natures in comparison of the lower creation, as God hath made us intelligent beings; but we should ever remember that the faculties he has given us are but finite and limited at the best; and that many things are above them, which they cannot grasp, "things too wonderful for us, which we know not," Job xlii. 3. We find it even so in natural things; the wisest and the greatest men will readily own themselves to be posed in several of these: and much more may it be expected to be so in things supernatural; especially in what belongs to the great God, his nature, and purposes, and the mysteries of his providence. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? Job xi. 7.

Now a just sense of this imperfection of our own capacities, will dispose us absolutely to credit God's testimony, as far as he has been pleased to give it, and we can discern his mind, whatever difficulties may attend that revelation, as to the manner of things discovered by it, beyond our capacity to solve. God's word alone will be a sufficient reason of faith to a humble mind. And on the other hand, it would teach us not to pretend to be wise above

above what is written in matters of pure revelation; not to venture to form ſchemes of our own, to account how ſuch things are, where none are delivered in God's word; at leaſt not to be poſitive and dogmatical in them: but in "the deep things of God," to ſatisfy ourſelves to underſtand ſo much of them as God hath revealed by his Spirit in his word; becauſe ſuch "things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," any farther than he has been pleaſed to make them known, 1 Cor. ii. 10. 11.

(2.) An apprehenſion of our own fallibility, and liableneſs to miſtake, even where we may think we judge right. When we conſider the power of prejudice, or readineſs to make raſh and haſty judgments, the plauſible colours which may be put upon error, the indiſpoſition of our minds in our fallen ſtate for the admiſſion of divine truths; when we conſider theſe things, we have reaſon in moſt judgments we form, to carry this cautionary thought along with us, that it is poſſible we may be miſtaken. Who is there among us who is not conſcious to himſelf that he hath actually been miſtaken in many former judgments he hath made of things, even in ſome wherein once he was very poſitive? And certainly this is a good reaſon, why we ſhould carry the thought of our fallibility about with us in our future time. Thoſe indeed who have made the deepeſt ſearches, and the moſt impartial inquiries in every age, have diſcovered moſt miſtakes in themſelves; and therefore have juſtly entertained the moſt lively ſenſe of the poſſibility

possibility of their being still mistaken in many things.

Now humility in this view would teach us,

Not indeed upon that account to surrender ourselves to the absolute conduct and government of other men, who are fallible as well as we. To this the church of Rome would lead us, but on pretence of infallibility to rest ourselves upon; though they neither are agreed among themselves where to place it, nor give us any proof from Scripture or their own conduct, that such a glorious gift is lodged with them. If any others would lead us to such an implicit faith in their dictates, while they disclaim infallibility, their claim is still more absurd. If our judgment be not so good, or our capacities not so enlarged, as our neighbours; yet we are obliged to make the best of them, and to judge for ourselves. Christ blames the body of the Jewish people for "not judging of themselves what was right," Luke xii. 57. We must answer for ourselves to God in the great day; and therefore it can neither be laudable nor a safe humility, to take our religion from the dictates of any fallible man or number of men.

But a just apprehension of our own liableness to mistake, should induce us in all our searches after divine truth to be very desirous of divine illumination and guidance; that God by his Spirit of truth would "shew us his ways, teach us his paths," and "lead us in his truth," Psal. xxv. 4, 5. It should keep us ever open to farther light, willing to learn; we should never behave, as if we had made

our

our laſt underſtanding, but be willing on any proper occaſion to review our ſentiments, and to allow a cool and unprejudiced conſideration of what may be ſaid againſt them. And though we ſhould not ſee reaſon to change our own thoughts upon ſuch inquiries, but be more confirmed by them; yet we ſhould be tender in our cenſures of others, whom we apprehend to be miſtaken, as long as they give credible evidence in other reſpects that they are conſcientious.

(3.) A moderate apprehenſion of our own attainments in knowledge, when we compare them with the attainments of other men. Every good man indeed judges himſelf to be in the right in every particular ſentiment which he maintains; for if he was convinced that it was an error, he would give it up: And it muſt neceſſarily follow from hence, that he cannot but think thoſe of a contrary judgment to be miſtaken, as long as he judges himſelf in the right. Is he therefore to be puffed up above others? No, by no means. But it is a becoming humility in moſt caſes, even where we think ourſelves in the right, yet to believe it poſſible however that thoſe who differ from us may be in the right; and therefore to be willing to hear what they have to offer for their judgment. If we judge our knowledge ſuperior to others with whom we compare ourſelves; yet we ſhould ſtill remember that in this life *we* all *know but in part*, 1 Cor. xiii. 9. If ſome know leſs, others know more than we: If we are better acquainted with ſome particulars, they may ex-

ceed us in other parts of knowledge. We may have made less improvement in proportion to our greater advantages, than they have made of fewer opportunities: And especially that after all we owe it more to the providence of the grace of God than to ourselves, that we are distinguished from the most stupid and ignorant in the world. Humility therefore will keep us from despising any, and incline us to learn all we can, even from the meanest: For it will possess us with this truth, 1 Cor. viii. 2. "If any man think that he knoweth any thing," and as the context shews the Apostle to mean, because of that knowledge despiseth others, "he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

(4.) A persuasion of the small value of the most exalted knowledge, without a suitable practical influence. Knowledge even of divine things, is of little valuable use but in subservience to practice. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them," John xiii. 7. It will not render us more acceptable to God, but more inexcusable, and liable to "be beaten with many stripes," if we rest in the most extensive knowledge, Luke xii. 47. 48. A man comparatively of low attainments in knowledge, if his heart is right with God, is truly acceptable; while a resolved sinner, though he understood all mysteries, will be eternally disowned by him: And no wonder, since exalted knowledge may leave a man of no better a temper than a Devil.

2. Humble thoughts of our own goodness, is another branch of humbleness of mind.

Not

Not that we are required to be insensible of any thing that is truly good and valuable in us: But christian humility includes

A sense of the undeservingness of our own goodness at the hands of God, even if it was perfect. Whatever the pride of nature may suggest, this is the lesson which Christ teaches his disciples, Luke xvii. 10. "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do," and no more. It could not properly deserve divine favour; how much less capable are we of merit by any thing we do in our lapsed state?

An apprehension of the great disparity there is between the goodness of God, and the goodness of any creature: From which our Saviour teaches us to conclude, that "none is good save one, that is God," Luke xviii. 19. None is originally, absolutely, necessarily and unchangeably good, but God only. Created goodness is derived from God; compared with his, it is incompleat, and capable of addition; and in its own nature it is changeable, as we find the goodness of angels and of innocent man was in fact.

An affecting conviction of our own sinfulness, and of the guilt contracted by it. Evangelical humility implies a sense of our lost and miserable state by the apostacy; so that we cannot lay claim of ourselves to the divine mercy, and yet can have no hope without mercy: That we are not only less than the least of his mercies, but have forfeited them all,

all, and deſerve ill, deſerve wrath at his hands; and could not hope to ſtand, if he ſhould mark iniquity: That from a lively ſenſe of this, we are heartily willing to be beholden to the Goſpel-way of relief by the atonement and righteouſneſs of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and rely upon that alone for our pardon and acceptance with God, as conſcious we have nothing in ourſelves to rely upon. This is one principal part of Goſpel humility, that we ſee ourſelves *ſick*, and therefore to *need the phyſician*; and *ſinners*, who *need repentance*, Luke v. 31, 32. That we humbly call to remembrance our particular offences, and penitently confeſs them before God, ſuing for his pardoning mercy in Chriſt, with the temper of the publican, "God be merciful to me a ſinner," Luke xviii. 13. And that from a ſenſe of our deſert of worſe, we chearfully ſubmit to his preſent corrections. We muſt proudly forget our own caſe, when we repine at his mild diſcipline.

A ſenſe of the imperfection of our goodneſs at the beſt in this world, is another branch of humility to which the Goſpel leads us. If we are recovered from the dominion of ſin, yet, without unſufferable pride, we ſhall ſee reaſon to confeſs that we ſin daily, and come ſhort of the glory of God; that we *cannot underſtand* all *our errors*, and need to be *cleanſed from our ſecret faults*, Pſal. xix. 12. that no grace or holy diſpoſition is compleat in us, but ever needs improvement, and is ſubject to interruption in its exerciſe and great decays.

An acknowledgment that we are principally

ly indebted to God for whatever is good in us, is also to be comprehended. That we principally owe to him the beginning of any good work in us; and must expect from him the perfecting of it, Phil. i. 6. If we are better than others, we owe it to the grace of God, who hath "made us to differ," 1 Cor. iv. 7. Either we were as bad as any, till we were "washed and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11. Or we might have been as bad, was it not for the restraints of his providence or grace. In a word, the humble soul, whatever goodness he is conscious of, has this for the abiding and thankful sense of his soul, "By the grace of God I am what I am," 1 Cor. xv. 10.

And lastly, a modest apprehension of our own goodness, compared with that of other men, must enter into the christian temper. I say not, that christian humility will oblige us to condemn ourselves as worse than all others; though, as we know ourselves best, it is ordinarily true, that we know more amiss in ourselves, as to the number if not the kinds of sins, than we can do in any other particular person. But it will dispose us to esteem as well at least of other people's goodness, as of our own, as far as there are credible evidences of it: In which sense the Apostle exhorts, Phil. ii. 3. "In lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves." We should not admit uncharitable jealousies and evil surmisings of them, where we have no just foundation: but think the best of them that

we can, and observe their excellencies as well as their defects; the excellencies in which they may shine above us, though we should exceed them in some others. Humility will incline us to make all charitable allowances for their failings and defects, when we are conscious of so many of our own, to censure them with gentleness, Rom. ii. 1. to "restore them in the spirit of meekness," Gal. vi. 1. and not vauntingly to say to any, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou," Isa. lxv. 5. A lowly mind will consider even the worst of men as such with whom we partake in the same nature, the same sinful nature; who are bought with the same price as we; who have an offer of the same spiritual and eternal blessings; and are at least capable, by the same grace which hath made us to differ from them, of the same everlasting happiness.

3. A humble sense of our dependance and wants.

And here first and principally we are concerned to have a humble sense of our dependance on God, and our need of him. That in the sphere of nature we cannot subsist of ourselves, but "live, and move, and have our beings, in him," Acts xvii. 28. That "our times are in his hands," the time of our continuance in life, the circumstances of our lot and condition, and all the particular events that can any way concern us. If "he takes away our breath we die, and return to our dust," and cannot recal it for a moment longer. Our understandings and reasonable pow-

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ers continually depend on him. A slight touch of the brain may soon raise out all the traces of wisdom and knowledge, and change a wise man into a fool or a madman, unless God protect our powers in their regular course. If he will speak peace, who can speak trouble? And if he will exercise us with rebukes, we are never out of his reach, but he can easily make a way to his anger. We hold no comforts by any tenure but his pleasure. He has an unlimited, uncontroulable power over us, and an indisputable right to do with us as seems good in his sight. If our souls are under the power of these apprehensions, humility will teach us to live in daily dependance on him for every thing we need: to expect our supplies from his favour and blessing, more than from the kindness of our friends, or from the wisest measures we can take ourselves: to maintain a constant thankfulness for the bounties of providence; not to be much lifted up for the sake of any of those loseable comforts; and to suppress every fretful and impatient murmer at any of the events that befal us.

And in the sphere of grace, we should have an equal sense of our constant need of his influences. That we need his mercy to pardon our sins, and help our infirmities every day. That we can perform no religious exercise well, nor discharge the duty of any relation commendably, nor acquit ourselves honourably in any trial, nor make any advances in the divine life, nor be blessings in our generation, without the light and grace of his good Spirit. That we need his quickening influences

ences to think a good thought, and to bring it to maturity; his ſupplies of light and ſtrength to overcome any temptation, to ſucceed in any conflict, or even to maintain the ground we have already gained. To live in the conſtant lively ſenſe of this and therefore not to truſt in our own hearts or our beſt endeavours, but in his grace and bleſſing, is one eminent part of "walking humbly with our God."

But then, ſecondly, a humble ſenſe of our ſubordinate dependance upon our fellow-creatures, and the need we have of them, is not to be omitted in the deſcription of humility. We ſhould conſider, that by the law of our creation, our condition is ſo ordered, that we cannot comfortably ſubſiſt independent of our fellow-creatures. Even thoſe in the moſt advanced and eaſy circumſtances of life, need the aſſiſtance of their inferiors; yea, the plenty they enjoy could not enable them to be more at eaſe than the meaneſt, if they had not the benefit of their labours. "The king himſelf is ſerved by the field," Eccl. v. 9. and is indebted to the induſtry and pains of thoſe who cultivate it: and the various conveniences and accommodations of life which ſome enjoy above others, could not be attained with all their wealth, if the diligence and ſkill of thoſe much below them was wanting. Every link in the chain of ſocieties contributes to the good of the whole. In the body politic, as well as the natural body, and in the body of Chriſt, "the eye cannot ſay unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head

head to the feet, I have no need of you :—— But God hath tempered the body together, that there should be no schism in the body," 1 Cor. xii. 21. 24. This should make all sensible of their dependant state, and of their interest in the society to which they belong, and beside this dependance of the highest on the lowest at all times; it should be remembered farther, that in the changeableness of human affairs, those who are now in the most prosperous estate, know not how soon they may need the kind offices, the good will of those in the lowest condition of life. Instances of such an alteration continually occur, and therefore should abase the pride of those who may now be most exalted. This naturally leads us to a fourth branch of humility.

4. A modest apprehension of our own rank and station.

And, compared with the blessed God, we cannot think too low of ourselves. So "the nations are as a drop of a bucket; and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing," Isa. xl. 15. All the relations in which we stand to him, bespeak the profoundest submission due from us: as we are his creatures, his subjects, preserved by him every moment, disposed of at his pleasure, and such as must appear at his bar. The very relation of children, which bespeaks the greatest friendship on his part, and freedom on ours, yet obliges to humility before him. All lead us highly to magnify him, and to abase ourselves: so the very angels above behave. His condescension

ſcenſion ſhould be adored in every favour he ſhews, becauſe he "humbleth himſelf to behold the things in heaven or upon earth." And therefore the language of our hearts upon the view of all his benefits, ſhould be like David's Pſal. viii. 4. "What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the ſon of man, that thou viſiteſt him?" Pſal. cxliv. 3. "Lord what is man that thou takeſt knowledge of him? or the ſon of man, that thou makeſt account of him?" Or with Job, chap. vii 17. "What is man that thou ſhouldſt magnify him? that thou ſhouldſt ſet thine heart upon him?" Humility will teach us neither to diſpute the precepts nor the providence of one who needs not our conſent to give him a right to rule us, but has a natural authority over us, and is neceſſarily and infinitely exalted above us.

Revelation alſo teaches us to conſider ourſelves as beneath many other inviſible beings, by the ſtate of our creation: as "made lower than the angels," Pſal. viii. 5. A rank of creatures behind them in the original capacity of our natures, while even the higheſt of them is infinitely beneath the bleſſed God.

And for our fellow creatures of the human race, we ſhould conſider them all, as of the ſame nature with us, and therefore near akin; "God having made of one blood all nations of men, that dwell on the face of the earth," Acts xvii. 26. That any diſtinctions made by outward circumſtances, are in the account of God and in themſelves, really but little things: that if the diſtinctions made between us and others,

others, in the figure made in the world, were ever so important, the providence of God has been much more concerned than we, in making that difference: and that all differences between men, besides those of true goodness, will entirely cease with the stroke of death.

In such a state of our case, humility will dispose to the chearful performance of the duties of humanity to all men; esteeming them all as our brethren, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. We shall not put any mighty value upon ourselves, merely, because we may enjoy a larger share than others of the riches or honours of the world; but reckon the human nature, which they partake of along with us, to set us all more upon the level, than the differences of outward rank can exalt one in value above another; and esteem goodness to ennoble and recommend more than mere greatness. But since the providence of God, our common ruler, is principally concerned in the differences made in mens outward rank, a humble mind will not think much of observing the duties to others, whether above or below him, which the word of God hath annexed even to those providential differences between their and his own lot. If they are above him, he will chearfully "render them their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour," Rom. xiii. 7. And on the other hand, if he stands in a superior rank, will readily "condescend to men of low estate," chap. xii. 16. Be willing to do to them

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any good offices in his power, and to treat them with modesty and courteousness, without any thing of supercilious contempt.

These things may set in a competent light the nature of the christian virtue of humility. It will be your wisdom to turn in upon yourselves by way of reflection, and to enquire how the temper of your own spirits stands in this matter. We shall see in the next discourse the importance of the enquiry.

SERMON III.

Christian Humility.

COL. iii. 12. middle of the verse.

Put on—Humbleness of mind.

II. I AM to shew the special obligations which lie upon us as Christians, to cultivate a humble temper.

1. Humility is a grace of the first rank and eminence in christianity. So that while it seems to carry in the notion of it a lessening of ourselves, it exalts a man in the christian character above any thing else. This may appear several ways.

(1.) It is mentioned in Scripture with peculiar marks of distinction and honour. Under the Old Testament, when God would sum up the things which are eminently good in his account,

account, this is marked for one, Mic. vi. 8. "He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Pride is ſtigmatized as his peculiar abhorrence; but humility honoured with the fulleſt teſtimonies of his approbation. "Pride and arrogancy—do I hate," ſays Wiſdom, Prov. viii. 13. "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he reſpect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off," Pſal. cxxxiii. 6. When the Son of God condeſcended in our nature to inſtruct mankind, he ſet humility in the front of his beatitudes, and at the head of his excellent ſermon, Matt. v. 4. "Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit:" as if it was the firſt leſſon in which he would have his diſciples inſtructed. The importance of it, and the rank it holds in our religion, is ſtill more emphatically deſcribed by him in another place, Matt. xviii. 4. "Whoſoever ſhall humble himſelf as this little child, the ſame is greateſt in the kingdom of heaven," or in the Goſpel-church, the chriſtian diſpenſation: As if he had ſaid, he that excels in humility, is the greateſt and the beſt Chriſtian. It is a laudable ambition to aſpire at this foremoſt rank of honour among the diſciples of Chriſt.

(2.) The moſt diſtinguiſhable promiſes are made to it: ſuch as mark it out for a temper eminently in the way of divine favour. The prayers of the humble are entitled to a peculiar regard, Pſal. ix. 12. "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble." Pſal. x. 17, "Lord,

thou haſt heard the deſire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cauſe thine ear to hear." They are encouraged to expect the gracious preſence of God abiding with them, Iſa. lvii. 15. "Thus ſaith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place; with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones;" ſo does the divine Majeſty condeſcend; as if he would ſignify to us, that in a ſort with the humble he will ſhew himſelf humble. Such are aſſured of farther meaſures of grace. While God "reſiſteth the proud, he giveth grace to the humble," Jam. iv. 6. 1 Pet. v. 5. The proud ſhall miſs of the aim they have ſo much at heart, ſelf-exaltation; but the humble are in the way to the trueſt glory, while they ſeem to fly from it, Matt. xxxiii. 12. "Whoſoever ſhall exalt himſelf ſhall be abaſed; and he that ſhall humble himſelf, ſhall be exalted." He ſhall be high in God's eſtimation. God is like to put the greateſt honour on ſuch a one by the uſe he makes of him, and even men are commonly more diſpoſed to reſpect him.

(3.) It is in its own nature a neceſſary introduction to the other graces and duties of chriſtianity. This is not a religion calculated for the proud, but the lowly.

Humility is neceſſary to faith. Without this we ſhall not be in a diſpoſition to receive every doctrine of divine revelation as an undoubted truth upon the ſole teſtimony of God,

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and to ſilence our objections by that only authority. Pride and ſelf-ſufficiency was the principal reaſon why "Chriſt crucified was" of old "to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs."

It is equally neceſſary to obedience. A proud unbroken heart ſets up for itſelf, and at leaſt practically ſays, "Who is Lord over me?" It muſt therefore be firſt humbled, before the language of it will be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6.

Without this frame we ſhall not value a Saviour, ſo as to receive him and make uſe of him as he is offered in the Goſpel. We ſhall not be fond of being beholden to another for our pardon and acceptance with God, till we have an abaſing ſenſe of our own guilty and miſerable condition. "The whole have no need of the phyſician, but they that are ſick," Luke v. 31. As long as men "think that they are rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that they are wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked," they will pay little regard to Chriſt's "counſel, to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they may be rich: and white raiment, that they may be clothed," Rev. iii. 17, 18. This was the foundation of the difference of behaviour between the phariſee and the publican: The "phariſee truſted in himſelf that he was righteous, and deſpiſed others;" and ſo came to God with an arrogant ſelf-ſufficiency; but the publican had a lively ſenſe of his own ſinfulneſs and unworthineſs; and therefore came in the moſt hum-

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ble manner, and with the moſt humble requeſt, "God be merciful to me a ſinner," Luke xviii. 9——13.

Without a humble ſpirit we ſhall not prize the grace of the Holy Spirit, nor live in conſtant dependance on his aids; unleſs we are ſenſible of the deceitfulneſs and badneſs of our own hearts, and of our own inſufficiency for that which is good.

Without humility we cannot perſevere in our adherence to Chriſt; but ſhall be ready to take offence when we are called out to trials and exerciſes. The proud mind that is full of itſelf, is not eaſily content to bear reproaches; to be meanly thought of by others; to be expoſed to the trial of cruel mockings; to ſacrifice reputation, and honour, and eaſe, and every valuable outward comfort, to the pleaſing of God, and the ſecuring of a good conſcience. But humility will go a great way to make all theſe things ſet light. That will form our ſouls to a placid reſignation to the will of God, as wiſer and fitter to determine our lot than ourſelves. We ſhall not brook ſo ill the reflections of other people, when we have a juſt ſenſe of much amiſs in us. We ſhall not think much of any ill uſage we meet with by the way, or think we have any reaſon to complain; when we are conſcious that we deſerve much worſe, that we are leſs than the leaſt of the mercies we enjoy; and eſpecially that the heavenly reward, as it is unſpeakably great, ſo is altogether undeſerved. And humble apprehenſions of ourſelves compared with other people, will go a great way towards ſilencing

lencing complaints, when we conſider what others have undergone, who were much more wiſe, and holy, and uſeful than we.

Without this grace we ſhall be indiſpoſed to receive that aſſiſtance from other men in the way to heaven, which we might obtain. Thoſe who are wiſe in their own conceit, deſpiſe the admonitions of their pious parents and friends, are impatient of reproof, are above miniſterial inſtructions; and for want of a modeſt apprehenſion of their own defects, ſuppoſe themſelves too great proficients in knowledge to learn, or in goodneſs to improve.

And laſtly, without this lowly diſpoſition we cannot poſſibly perform that compaſs of duty to our fellow creatures, which makes ſo great a part of true chriſtianity. A haughty mind will ill comport with "becoming all things to all men, that we may gain ſome; with pleaſing our neighbour for his good to edification; with bearing all things;" with the forgiveneſs of injuries; with condeſcenſion to the weakneſſes and humours of other men, and to the meaneſt offices when we can have hope of doing them good thereby.

So evident is it, that humility is a grace of the firſt rank in chriſtianity.

2. It is this grace which adorns every other virtue, and recommends religion to every beholder. If all the characters mentioned in that rule of conduct, which the apoſtle lays down in Phil. iv. 8. can be ſaid to meet in any one grace, it is in humility. "Whatſoever things are true," have a juſt foundation in the rea-

son of things, "whatsoever things are honest," or honourable, "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Our light cannot more effectually shine before men, than by not affecting to have it shine, that is by humility. Hence St. Peter calls us to "be cloathed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5. And St. Paul, in the text, to "put it on" as an ornament. It casts a lustre even upon attainments comparatively low; while pride eclipses the beauty of great and distinguishing excellencies. It conciliates esteem from all, even from the proud themselves, who value that in others which they care not to practise in their own case. And therefore, as we are concerned to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour," and to take care that "our good be not evil-spoken of;" it concerns us to live in the exercise of humility, without which all the train of christian graces beside would suffer in their amiableness, and their use for the glory of God.

3. Humility is eminently recommended to us by the example of the author and finisher of our faith. There is hardly any one part of the amiable character of Christ, of which the Gospel-history gives us more instances, than of his humbleness of mind; nor any, in which he is more frequently and expressly proposed to us for a pattern. For instance,

(1.) His assuming the human nature was the highest instance of humiliation that ever was or could be given. "That the word, who was

was in the beginning with God, and was God," ſhould conſent to be "made fleſh." Though he was no lower a perſon than "God bleſſed for evermore;" yet he vouchſafed to deſcend from the habitation of his holineſs and glory, to lay aſide in appearance his divine character, and all that viſible glory which had been uſed to attend him in his manifeſtations under the Old Teſtament; and was content to take upon him the nature, the ſtate, and the ſinleſs infirmities of mankind; to be "made of a woman, made under the law." This was an inſtance of humility, of which none but himſelf was capable; which indeed is ſo far above our direct imitation in the letter of it, that the manner of it exceeds our comprehenſion. And yet it is a very proper argument to inculcate upon us humility in our meaſure, and with that view is propoſed to us by the apoſtle, in Phil. ii. He had among other things exhorted to "lowlineſs of mind," ver. 3. and adds, ver. 5. "Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus." How was ſuch a temper ſhewn by Chriſt? it follows, "Who being in the form of God," [being truly God, or, having been uſed to appear under the Old Teſtament, with a godlike glory, which he would not have been ſuffered to do, had he not been true God] "thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himſelf of no reputation," [emptied himſelf, or, as the ſame word is rendered, 1 Cor. ix. 15. *made void* his glorying, as to the outward manifeſtation of his glory] "and took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men. Though

Though he was rich," with the riches of the Godhead, "yet for our sakes," out of his abundant grace to us, "he became poor," 2 Cor. viii. 9. But how should the same mind be in us, which was thus expressed by the eternal Son of God? We should never then think much of any instance of self-abasement suitable to our measure, to which we can be called for serving a valuable end; and be always sensible that it can never come up to this amazing condescension of the Son of God.

(2.) When he appeared in the world in the human nature, he affected not worldly glory and honour. He contented not himself merely to lay aside the glory of heaven, and his glorious appearance by the Shechinah, and to enter upon the condition of mortal man, which at the best is unspeakably low and mean in comparison of the divine glory; but he appeared in the world with many additional circumstances of meanness. He descended from a family which was then very obscure, which had lost the antient dignity and grandeur of his father David. Mary his mother was a woman in a low condition; capable of giving the Lord of glory but very poor entertainment at his coming into the world; and therefore at his birth "she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was then no room for them in the inn;" Luke ii. 7. There were no servile attendants, no sumptuous preparations made for his nativity; but as in his after-life, so now he had scarce "a place where to lay his head." The shepherds

ſhepherds could never have divined without the inſtruction of an angel, that here, and in this manner, was "born a Saviour, which was Chriſt the Lord," ver. 8—11. And the wiſe men of the Eaſt muſt be under a divine conduct, to find the King of the Jews in ſuch a deſpicable place. While he was growing up, he lived with his reputed father, a carpenter; and thence was ſtiled "the carpenter's ſon," Matt. xiii. 55. When he entered upon his public miniſtry, the generality of thoſe whom he choſe for his diſciples and followers, were poor fiſhermen, or men of a like condition. He made no outward figure, and mainly ſojourned in places of ſmall note. He had no wealth, or ſecular honour; not ſo much as a ſettled habitation or certain proviſion. He contemned worldly honours, when they were offered him; as when the people would have taken him by force, and made him a king. He chearfully underwent poverty and contempt and ill uſage of various kinds, before he ſubmitted to the laſt act of his humiliation, to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs."

Now ſurely all this was to recommend humility to us: to teach his diſciples not to ſeek high things for themſelves, nor to value themſelves much upon a large ſhare of worldly enjoyments. If he had thought that outward ſhew and grandeur would have ſerved better thoſe ends, for which he came into the world; he could eaſily have ſecured to himſelf all the riches of the earth, and have appeared with a pomp far ſuperior to the miſtaken apprehenſion

ſion of the Jews concerning their Meſſiah. But he rather choſe to teach his diſciples humility, and ſelf-denial, and mortification, by his own voluntary entrance upon the ſtage of life, and paſſing over it to the end, in a low condition.

(3.) As man, he was a pattern of great humility toward God. He "ſought not his own glory, but the glory of him that ſent him," John viii. 50. chap. vii. 18. This was his profeſſed aim through his courſe on earth, and conſpicuous in the courſe of his words and actions. Hence as man, he diſclaimed any pretenſions to ſuch knowledge as was above the capacity of his human nature or his attainment at that time, Mark xiii. 32. And when one, who took him for no more than a man, ſeemed to aſcribe goodneſs to him in too exalted a ſenſe for a creature; he expoſtulates with him about it, and aſſerts the perfections of Godhead to be ſo peculiar, that even thoſe wherein creatures may bear the divine image, do yet belong to God in ſuch a manner as they can belong to nōne elſe: "Why calleſt thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God;" Mat. xix. 17. He aſcribed the glory of his works to his Father. He was entirely obedient to his commands, for what he ſhould ſay and do in the minuteſt circumſtances, and for the hardeſt ſervices. He chearfully ſubmitted to his will in the ſevereſt ſufferings? and paid him all religious homage in acts of worſhip. The remarkable inſtances of this have been produced in another diſcourſe, when he was repreſented as an example of godlineſs.

(4.) He

(4.) He was a pattern of the greateſt humility to mankind.

He was ready to condeſcend to the meaneſt in order to their good. Moſt of the miracles he performed, were wrought upon thoſe who were of a low condition. When a man of figure beſought him to heal his ſervant, he was as ready to do that kind office for him, as if it had been the maſter himſelf, Mat. viii. 6. &c. He ſtood ſtill in the way to regard the cry of a poor beggar, as much as if he had been a man of the greateſt conſideration, when the multitude would fain have ſilenced him, Mark x. 46, &c. and eſteemed it as "his meat and drink" to maintain a converſation with the poor woman of Samaria, in order to her ſoul's advantage, though "his diſciples marvelled that he talked with her," John iv. 27. He overlooked not even little children; but called his followers to learn good inſtructions from them, and to be very tender of them: Matth. xviii. 1——10. In the next chapter we find him taking them up in his arms and bleſſing them; and when his diſciples rebuked thoſe who brought them to Chriſt, he would have them ſuffered to come unto him; chap. xix. 13, 14.

He was willing to ſtoop to the meaneſt offices for the meaneſt perſons. He freely touched a poor man, who was over-ſpread with a leproſy, in order to his cure, though it was naturally ungrateful, and legally unclean, Mark i. 41. And particularly recommends the greateſt condeſcenſions to his diſciples, by uſing an emblematic action for that purpoſe,

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of waſhing their feet, John xiii. 5, &c. Thus he made it evident in his whole conduct, that "he came not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter," Matt. xx. 28. And yet, which was another inſtance of humility,

He was not above receiving and acknowledging the reſpect ſhewn him by the meaneſt. He accepted the charitable contributions of ſome good women, who "miniſtered unto him of their ſubſtance," Luke viii. 3. He takes notice of the honeſt and well-meant Hoſannahs paid him by children, Matt. xxi. 15. And the more hearty mark of reſpect ſhewn him by the woman who poured ointment on his head, as he ſat at meat, he has put an everlaſting mark of honour upon, Matt. xxvi. 13.

Now how forcible an engagement ſhould this be to all who profeſs a relation to him, to imitate him in a virtue which made ſo great a part of the character of their maſter? To "learn of him, who was lowly of heart," Mat. xi. 29.

4. Humility is a grace which will go along with us to heaven. The only inhabitants of that world who were ever lifted up with pride, have been long ago caſt down from thence to hell. The "Seraphims cover their feet" in preſence of the divine majeſty, magnify him with inceſſant adorations, and abaſe themſelves continually before him, Iſa. vi. 2, 3. The repreſentations given us of the glorious company above in the New-Teſtament, beſpeak the ſame lowlineſs of mind before God. "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that ſat on the throne, and worſhip him that liveth

liveth forever and ever, and caſt their crowns before the throne;" Rev. iv. 10. And to the ſame purpoſe, chap. v. 10. And as a farther deſcription of the humility of their adoration, they are ſaid to "fall before the throne on their faces," chap. vii. 11. and chap. xi. 16. God in that world is all in all; and every bleſſed ſpirit there, up to the moſt exalted celeſtial mind, maintains the ſenſe of infinite diſtance, in the midſt of the moſt familiar and ſatisfying approaches; and receives the bounties of the great Creator, crying, grace, grace. We have a ſpecimen of the humble temper attending ſaints to the judgment-day, in the repreſentation of it given by our Saviour, Matth. xxv. When the judge will take notice of their acts of charity, and put the moſt kind and gracious conſtruction upon them that can be, as done to himſelf in his members: they are repreſented as having ſo low an opinion of their goodneſs, that they can hardly think themſelves to deſerve the commendation. "Lord, when ſaw we thee an hungered, and fed thee?" &c. While the ſinner is deſcribed as carrying his fond conceit to the bar, and hardly convinced of the neglects charged upon him by his judge: "When ſaw we thee an hungered, &c. and did not miniſter unto thee?" We may ſay indeed in commendation of humility, beyond many other graces, that it is greater and more excellent than they, for the ſame reaſon that *love* is preferred by the apoſtle to *faith and hope*, becauſe it *never faileth*, 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 13.

INFERENCES.

1. Thoſe who are deſtitute of this grace, whatever profeſſion they have made of chriſtianity, have in truth the rudiments of it yet to learn. If they have been ſoaring upward to heaven itſelf in the ſublimeſt ſpeculations; if they have built up their hopes to the greateſt height upon other grounds, without laying this at the foundation; they muſt be content to come down again to learn this leſſon, which enters into the elements of Chriſt's religion. A proud Chriſtian is a contradictory character; as much as it would be to ſay, a wicked ſaint. The whole Goſpel, in its precepts, its great example, its glorious proſpects, tends to humble the pride of man: And therefore, whoever will come after Chriſt, muſt in this reſpect deny himſelf.

2. We ſhould look principally to the temper of our ſpirits, to judge of our humility. We may have the character of humble people with men from a modeſt outſide, and negligence of garb, a condeſcending carriage, lowly ſpeeches; while the God that ſearches the heart, may ſee pride reigning there under theſe fair diſguiſes, and that all ſuch plauſible appearances are only intended to gratify and ſupport a haughty and over-bearing diſpoſition. "Humbleneſs of mind" makes the chriſtian temper; and the "poor in ſpirit" are the heirs of the promiſe.

3. No ſingle branch of goodneſs deſerves more of our attention, in order to judge of the improving or declining ſtate of our ſouls, than

than this of humility. If we grow in knowledge, and are puffed up along with it, we loſe more in goodneſs, than we gain in profitable furniture. If we improve in other excellencies, but outſtrip that improvement in the conceit we have of ourſelves; we only make thoſe nothing in the ſight of God, which would otherwiſe be valuable. This is a *dead fly, that will* ſpoil the *whole box of ointment.* Whether we advance in right knowledge of God ourſelves, it cannot fail to make us ſenſible of our defects, and humble in the ſenſe of them. A man that improves in learning, ſees more defects in his attainments, when he hath made a good progreſs, than he did at ſetting out: He diſcerns a larger field of knowledge before him, after all his advances, than he had any notion of, when he firſt turned his thoughts that way. So it is with a lively Chriſtian; he ſees ſo much before him, that he "forgets the things that are behind, and reaches forth unto thoſe that are before," ſtill "preſſing toward the mark;" Phil. iii. 13, 14. This was Paul's character, when he was moſt fixedly ſet in heaven's way; and it will be the character of any Chriſtian, when he is ripening faſteſt for the heavenly harveſt.

SER-

SERMON IV.

PURITY.

PSAL. li. 10. the former part.

Create in me a clean Heart, O God.

ONE principal concern we have about ourselves, after the determination of the preference due to our souls above our bodies, is to regulate the appetites and passions we have by occasion of the body, conformable to the interests of the soul, and the precepts of God concerning them. A "clean heart," which is here prayed for, is one of the first things of that kind, which should come into our consideration.

This is sometimes taken in so extensive a sense as to signify holiness in general, in opposition to all sin, which is often in the Scripture style represented as the defilement of the soul. In other places it is to be understood in a more confined sense, for the temper directly opposed to criminal sensualities, or the ascendant of irregular appetites; to that which eminently bears the name of "filthiness of the flesh," 2 Cor. vii. 1. and especially to the violations of the seventh commandment. Thus we are to understand the "clean heart" in the text.

The

The Pſalmiſt had fallen into the horrible ſin of adultery; and being awakened to repentance upon the meſſage brought him by Nathan the prophet, he compoſed this Pſalm: wherein, beſides very ſuitable abaſing confeſſions of his ſin, he earneſtly ſolicits for pardoning mercy, to remove his guilt; for ſanctifying grace, to take away the ſtain itſelf, with which ſuch henious offences had polluted his ſoul; and for a recovery of the comfortable ſenſe of both in his own conſcience. The paſſage now propoſed to conſideration, is among the expreſſions wherein he prays for ſanctification. He had not been an utter ſtranger to this bleſſing till now; but eminent falls introduce ſuch a general and ſurpriſing diſorder into the ſoul, that a man has in a ſort his work in religion to begin anew. Therefore Peter's recovery after his ſcandalous denial of his maſter is ſpoken of, as if it was a ſecond converſion. "When thou art converted, ſtrengthen thy brethren," Luke xxii. 32. So the henious ſin of David had poiſoned his ſoul afreſh with impure thoughts and irregular inclinations, in ſuch a manner, that he ſaw occaſion to apply again for God's creating power, to recover him to a clean heart, as if he had never had one.

In conſidering this part of a good ſpirit, I would, I. Shew what is included in purity or cleanneſs of heart, as it ſtands oppoſed to fleſhly luſts and ſenſual practices. II. Point at ſome of the obligations we are under, to ſeek after and cultivate ſuch a temper of ſoul.

I. I would enquire into the meaning of "a

clean heart," or the proper ingredients and expreſſions of ſuch a temper of ſoul.

And you cannot but diſcern, that ſomething more is intended by it than a bare abſtinence from the outward and groſs acts of criminal ſenſuality. Would to God, that none of theſe ſhewed their face in a chriſtian land; that there was no reaſon to lament many open inſtances of impurity and lewdneſs, which hardly ſhun the light. If the viſible reformation of manners was advanced, much diſhonour and provocation to the bleſſed God, and grief to the hearts of good men, would be prevented, and the contagion of vice would not ſpread as it does. But though the works of the fleſh are undeniable evidences of an impure heart; yet other reſtraints may prevent outward enormities, where the heart is not truly purified. Men may be "like whited ſepulchres, which appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead mens bones, and of all uncleanneſs;" Mat. xxiii. 27.

That which the Pſalmiſt had in his deſire, and which every Chriſtian ſhould have in his, is, that the matter may be carried much farther, into the temper of the ſoul; that there may be not only *clean hands* but *a pure heart* alſo, which are both united in the character of a citizen of Zion, Pſal. xxiv. 4. And ſuch a purified heart will import ſuch things as theſe:

1. A fixed, habitual abhorrence of all forbidden indulgencies of the fleſh. Since human nature is corrupted, and bodily appetite has loſt the bridle of reaſon and religion; the affections are become impetuous toward ſenſual

ſual gratifications; the hearts of ſinners, or their love and liking, are on that ſide. Or if the remains of natural conſcience are ſo ſtrong, and the biaſs of fear, and of ſhame in reference to other people, ſo far prevail, as to reſtrain from open pollutions; yet they content themſelves with this, though all the while a rooted averſion to all fleſhly luſts upon the principles of religion and duty is wanting. Here is the turning, diſcriminating point in God's account, between a clean and an impure heart. A man, whoſe heart is purified, looks upon ſenſualities as hateful to God, as "warring againſt his ſoul;" and therefore has a fixed deteſtation of them, as enemies to God, and to his own beſt intereſts. His *fear of God*, and his *love to him*, lead him thus to *hate evil*, Prov. viii. 13. Pſal. xcvii. 10. This fixed bent of heart againſt impurity, is that which principally conſtitutes a clean heart; and from this all the other fruits and expreſſions of ſuch a temper will proceed.

2. All paſt impurities, either of heart or life, will be reflected on with ſhame and ſorrow, where there is a clean heart. It is true, that which hath been done, cannot be recalled, ſo as that it ſhould ceaſe to be fact. But when any ſin is recalled to remembrance with unfeigned repentance, the heart is in a Goſpel-ſenſe purified from the ſtain of that ſin.

There are too many who "glory in their ſhame," Phil. iii. 19. They not only give a looſe to their vicious inclinations, but think of them with pleaſure afterwards, pride themſelves

ſelves in them, and ſpeak of them with a relish. They are "not aſhamed when they have committed abominations; neither can they bluſh," Jer. vi. 15. You may too often meet with ſuch old offenders, that when they are unable, by reaſon of the decays of age, any longer to practiſe the exceſſes of their youthful days; yet, inſtead of penitential tears and deep humiliation for their former crimes, call them to remembrance with an impudent pleaſure, boaſt of them as mighty atchievments, and ſeem ſorry for nothing ſo much as that they can practiſe them no longer. A ſpectacle that ſtrikes every ſerious mind with horror! God alludes to this in his charge againſt Iſrael, Ezek. xxiii. 19. "She multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein ſhe had played the harlot in the land of Egypt." God is there cenſuring the people of Iſrael for their ſpiritual whoredom or idolatry; that they provoked God afreſh by looking back with delight upon the idolatries practiſed by their anceſtors in the early days of their ſtate: But this is expreſſed by an alluſion to perſons acting over again their youthful ſins with pleaſure upon the ſtage of their imagination, and ſo renewing their offences in God's account. Others think of their former offences with a cold indifference; or if there is any remorſe, it is rather for the prejudice which they may have done to their health, or eſtate, or reputation, than from a ſenſe of their ſin againſt God. The ſin of ſuch people remains, both in the book of God to their condemnation,

demnation, and in the dominion of it in their own souls.

But it is the mark of a clean heart, to remember any past impurities with godly sorrow and a deep contrition of soul. He "acknowledgeth his transgression, and his sin is ever before him," Psalm li. 3. Every review opens the springs of penitential grief; and while he feels some kindly softenings, yet, like the Psalmist in the text, he is solicitous for farther cleansing, for a heart still more "purged from his old sins." Thus the frame of Ephraim is described, Jer. xxxi. 19. "I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." The hope of pardoning mercy will not extinguish, but excite genuine repentance, according to God's design in the discovery of it, Ezek. xvi. 63. "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee." Every new benefit conferred by a reconciled God, will heighten the displeasure of a clean heart at past offences, Ezek. xx. 42, 43. "I will bring you into the land of Israel," [out of your captivity in Babylon] "and there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils which ye have committed." This is a happy indication of the temper prayed for in the text.

3. A clean heart imports that the heart is actually freed in a good measure from impure thoughts

thoughts and irregular desires; or at least that they are not entertained with pleasure and delight.

The refining and regulation of the fancy and imagination, is a considerable branch of the purification of the heart; that vicious thoughts come not so often and so easily upon the stage at every turn, as they are apt to do in a mind devoted to sensuality. St. Peter speaks of some, 2 Pet. ii. 14. who "have eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin." And the old world was so abominably corrupt, particularly in sensualities, as the context shews, that we read of them, "that every imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. Many have reason and every sober thought drowned, either in actual fleshly indulgencies, or in a succession of vile imaginations in the intervals between gross acts of sin. Every slight occasion serves to revive impure images; and if they set themselves to think, it is to "make provision for the flesh, that they may fulfil the lusts thereof." Their heart answers the description of Babylon, in Rev. xviii. 2. It is "the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." A clean heart is a heart discharged from such habitual pollutions; wherein better thoughts, such as are holy and heavenly have place, and are entertained with true delight, as chosen and welcome guests.

I say not, that no impure or irregular thoughts do occasionally come into the minds of

of such who have attained to an evangelical purity. Such evil imaginations may be injected and darted by Satan into the mind of the most virtuous and good person in the world; or such events may occur in the course of things as can hardly fail to make a sudden impression upon the fancy. But if immediate care is taken to guard against the ill tendency of such impressions, as soon as they are discerned; if irregular inclinations which arise from foreign influence, are disallowed and opposed as soon as born; God will not be strict to mark iniquity: nor ought persons severely to condemn themselves for these, because they are so far from discovering the dominion of impurity, that they are hardly voluntary. It is not unusual for melancholy people to torment themselves exceedingly with such thoughts; in like manner as they are afflicted with some blasphemous thoughts, which they find at times started in their minds. Whereas in both cases, the very horror and detestation with which such thoughts are entertained, might, if they could consider things justly, take off their black apprehensions of themselves because of them. For whether they are from the devil, or the product of bodily distemper, or from whatever source they arise; as long as they are rejected with abhorrence, they are more their affliction than their sin: or, if they are sinful, will be imputed to the devil rather than to them. It is no more than a temptation to have them come into their minds; if they resist the temptation, summon up their own endeavours, and call in divine

vine help to master it; if the language of the heart be, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence to me:" then, instead of incurring guilt in the sight of God, by such vanquished temptations, they will be ranked by him among those who overcome.

But though the bare presence of such thoughts occasionally in the mind, will not argue an impure heart, as long as we are rather passive than active in them: yet if once we give our consent, as far as we take any pleasure and delight in them, or even if we can bear them with indifference; we immediately become transgressors. Then the "thought of foolishness is sin;" Prov. xxiv. 9. though it should proceed no farther than the heart. When men set themselves to ruminate upon any impure ideas that are offered to their fancy, till their affections are engaged, and unhallowed flames are kindled in their breasts; then they are defiled by them in God's account, whether they ever break out into act, or not: When *out of the heart* itself, disposed to them and siding with them, *proceed evil thoughts*, suppose of *murders*, *adulteries fornications*, *thefts*, *false-witnesses*, *blasphemies*; such evil thoughts, when they have gained the heart, and so proceed from itself, *defile the man*, Matt. xv. 19, 20.

On the contrary, he who is of a clean heart, "hates vain thoughts," Psal. cxix. 113. It is his desire as much as possible, to guard against their entrance; but if they enter, he will not suffer them quietly to "lodge with him,"

him," Jer. iv. 14. He cannot be at rest till they are dispossessed and gone.

4. A clean heart discovers itself by a cautious fear of the least degrees of impurity. While obstinate sinners make no account even of open enormities, and others think all well, if they do but abstain from them; a heart formed to real purity goes much deeper. He is careful to "abstain from all appearance of evil," 1 Thess. v. 22. He dares not allow himself to go to the utmost bounds of things lawful, because he reckons himself to be then upon a precipice. If he feels any of the poison working within, it gives him a sensible concern, though no human eye can discern it.

5. A clean heart necessarily implies a careful and habitual guard against every thing which tends to pollute the mind. The pretence of a good heart in any kind is vain unless it be "kept with all diligence," Prov. iv. 23.

Where there is therefore a bent of heart to purity, it will engage a man to maintain a guard over his senses, which provide furniture for the imagination, and are the conveyances of external temptation. The case of David, to which this Psalm refers, is a melancholy instance upon record, how dangerous it is to allow the senses an unrestrained liberty; no man indeed can fail to be sensible of this. Upon this account Solomon leaves the caution in relation to an ill woman, Prov. iv. 25. "Lust not after her beauty in thy heart; neither let her take thee with her eye-lids." And our Lord and Master forbids men to

"look upon to luſt after her," Matt. v. 28. Agreeable to the reſolution which holy Job had made long before for the preſervation of his own purity, Job xxxi. 1. For the ſame reaſons laſcivious pictures and repreſentations of any kind ſhould be avoided by all who would preſerve their virtue inviolate; and the reading of all impure and licentious books. Nor can I ſee how it conſiſts with a juſt concern to keep the mind unſpotted, to reſort to plays and maſquerades; which I believe have been too ſucceſsful corrupters of the preſent age. Moſt of the preſent plays, in their ſtructure, and ſcope, and thoughts, are wickedly adapted to vitiate the fancy, and recommend a diſſolution of manners; and by the beauty of action, the arts uſed to ſtrike the paſſions, and the looſe morals of the generality of thoſe who repreſent them, and of the company that attend upon them, they have ſuch a tendency to inſtil vice, that it is hardly poſſible for perſons to be often preſent at them without weakening the guards of virtue; and great numbers of young people, who were before untainted, have been introduced this way into the ſchool of vice, and ſoon have made a diſmal proficiency. The practice of maſquerades, which were of late revived among us, but which, thanks be to God, have been reſtrained by public authority, was ſtill more dangerous than the other. In theſe, unnatural diſguiſes, and an apprehenſion of the concealment of character, on the one hand expoſe to ſuch attacks upon virtue, as would ſcarce otherwiſe be attempted; and, on the other

other hand abate those restraints of modesty and decorum, which providence often makes use of to preserve people from notorious impurities, who have not the best principle, of the fear and love of God, for their security. Would to God that all who have taken Christ for their Master, would maintain such a sense of the infirmity of human nature, as to keep at the remotest distance from the known incentives to sensuality: and that they would take care also, that young people under their charge may be fortified by all the prudential methods they can use, against frequenting those nurseries of vice.

All loose and vicious company will be avoided as much as may be by those who have a clean heart; such company, as by their practice and converse evidently shew the impurity of their own hearts. This we are cautioned against, 1 Corinth. v. 11. and the reason is evident; "Evil communication corrupts good manners." This danger seems to be intimated in the manner of expression used in Jude 22. "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." Be not wanting in your best endeavours for the recovery even of profligate and accustomed sinners, as you have opportunity for it; but then let your attempts to reform them be attended with fear, lest you should receive any infection from them: and therefore the apostle adds; "hating even the garment spotted with the flesh:" Set about their reformation, with a lively apprehension of the danger of such society, that it is hard even to touch pitch and not be defiled; and

therefore

therefore be sure that you keep up a fixed abhorrence of their sin, while you apply yourselves to reclaim them.

Intemperance will carefully be avoided by those who have an earnest concern to maintain their purity: not only because of the sinfulness of it in itself; but because it lays a man open to many other sins, and particularly to impurities. Therefore the apostle joins a caution against both of these together, Rom. xiii. 13. "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness:" Not only as each of these separately considered, is opposite to a christian conversation; but also as rioting and drunkenness is so often the introduction to chambering and wantonness.

And to advance a step farther; a heart formed to the sincere love of purity, will not think much to restrain himself in some things which may be lawful in themselves, and safe to many others, if he finds by experience that they ordinarily prove occasions of sin to him. Though he will not censure others, where the law of God does not censure them; yet he will make it an ordinary rule to himself, to forbear as far as he can, that which seldom fails to be a temptation to him.

II. I proceed to represent the obligations that lie upon us to seek after such a purity of heart.

1. A ruling inclination to sensuality is directly contrary to the purity and holiness of the divine nature. "God is a spirit." He has made us indeed to consist of flesh and spirit:

it: but if we give an unbridled looſe to fleſhly appetite, inſtead of keeping the body under the dominion of the higher faculties, we ſhall abandon all that wherein we are capable of bearing the image of God, and "become like the beaſts that periſh." And this cannot be done by us without the guilt of debaſing our natures, when God had made us capable of nobler purſuits, and better reliſhes. It is obſervable, that in three ſeveral places where ſin is ſpoken of as *againſt God*, reference is had to the ſin of uncleanneſs. So it was in Joſeph's caſe, when he overcame the temptation with this thought; "How can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. David's confeſſion in this Pſalm had the ſame ſpecial evil in view, ver. 4. "Againſt thee, thee only, have I ſinned, and done this evil in thy ſight." And the prodigal ſon is repreſented to have "waſted his ſubſtance with riotous living," Luke, xv. 13. and in another verſe to have "devoured his living with harlots," ver. 30. and without doubt he had that as much as any other ſin in his eye, when he reſolved to return to his father with this penitent acknowledgement, ver. 18, 19. "I have ſinned againſt heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon." Thus the Scripture leads us to conſider this ſin as eminently againſt God. How much are we obliged therefore to cultivate purity? and eſpecially purity of heart, ſince properly we can bear the image of God only in our ſpirits.

2. Senſuality has a ſpecial tendency to ex-

tinguiſh the light of reaſon, and to unfit for any thing ſpiritual and ſacred. "Whoredom and wine, and new wine take away the heart," Hoſ. iv. 11. Such criminal indulgencies are both the effects of great blindneſs, and the means of increaſing it, Eph. iv. xviii, 19. No ſort of ſin commonly hardens the heart to a greater degree: Of which David was a melancholy inſtance; he ſeems not to have been recovered to a penitent ſenſe of his fall, till he received a meſſage from God by Nathan the prophet; and that was not till after the birth of the child. Nothing makes the mind more averſe to ſacred exerciſes, or indiſpoſes it more for the ſerious and ſpiritual performance of them. Hence the deluded youth who gives himſelf up to ſenſualities, is deſcribed when he comes to mourn at laſt, as reviewing this, among other pernicious effects of his evil practices, Prov. v. 14. "I was almoſt in all evil in the midſt of the congregation and aſſembly." His vices had ſo leavened his mind, that his thoughts were full of them, even when he appeared in worſhipping aſſemblies.

3. Senſuality is moſt contrary to the deſign and engagements of chriſtianity. Our bleſſed Lord and Maſter inculcated the ſtricteſt purity upon all his diſciples; not only an abſtinence from the groſs outward acts of uncleanneſs, but from polluting thoughts and deſires. To this purpoſe he vindicates the ſpiritual intention of the ſeventh commandment, in Matt. v. 27——30. and his practice kept at the remoteſt diſtance from every thing that had

had an impure aſpect. His intention in "giving himſelf for us," is declared to be "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himſelf a peculiar people," Tit. ii. 14. We are to conſider "our old man as crucified with him, that the body of ſin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve ſin;" Rom. vi. 6. "Sin ſhould not therefore reign in our mortal body, that we ſhould obey it in the luſts thereof," ver 12. i. e. A ſinful inclination of mind to the indulgence of bodily luſt, ſhould not be ſuffered to prevail in us. So, when the apoſtle puts the Theſſalonians in mind *what commandments* he and his fellow-ſervants in the Goſpel had *given them by the Lord Jeſus*, i. e. by his authority and under the direction of his Spirit; he preſſes this as a matter of ſpecial obligation on Chriſtians, 1 Theſſ. iv. 2——5. "This is the will of God, even your ſanctification, that ye ſhould abſtain from fornication: that every one of you ſhould know how to poſſeſs his veſſel in ſanctification and honour; not in the luſt of concupiſcence, even as the Gentiles which know not God." When Chriſt was aſcended into heaven, he puts a moſt particular mark of his abhorrence upon the deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitans: and at the ſame time of his approbation on thoſe Chriſtians who abhorred them, Rev. ii. 6. 15. Thoſe Nicolaitans were a ſet of vile and filthy hereticks at the beginning of chriſtianity who taught doctrines of the utmoſt licentiouſneſs, while they diſgraced the Chriſtian name by wearing it; and their practices were as lewd as their principles.

ciples. The Holy Jesus by a message from heaven takes care to stigmatize these filthy dreamers, and to animate his disciples to a rooted hatred of every impure principle and practice.

The apostle in several places urges this purity upon Christians from another argument, their participation of the Holy Spirit of God. "They are the temple of God, by the Spirit of God dwelling in them; and therefore they might be assured, that if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy;" 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. And elsewhere that "they are the members of Christ, and the temples of the Holy Ghost: Shall I then" (says he) "take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid;" chap. vi. 15. 19. Whatever others do, a Christian, who professes to be united to Christ by his Holy Spirit, should abhor the thought of foolishness.

4. The blessed hope with which christianity inspires us, lays us under a forcible engagement to present purity.

Those of the contrary temper, are absolutely excluded, by the express declarations of the Gospel, from the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God." Heb. xiii. 4. "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." And such are reckoned up among those who "shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone,"

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Rev. xxi. 8. and who are *without* the heavenly Jeruſalem, chap. xxxii. 14, 15. On the contrary, the promiſe of the future bleſſedneſs is moſt plainly made to the pure in heart, Mat. v. 8. "Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God." And this very repreſentation of the heavenly felicity, that it principaly conſiſts in the ſight and fruition of a holy God, ſhews that his conſtitution limiting that happineſs to the pure in heart, is founded in the nature and reaſon of things. We cannot reliſh it, or be made happy by it, any more than be allowed to ſhare in it, without a heart refined from the dregs of ſenſuality. Saints themſelves have but an imperfect reliſh for it here, ſince they are not diveſted of all remains of ſenſual inclinations: But becauſe they will be made perfectly righteous in the future ſtate, and raiſed to their full reſemblance of God in ſpirituality, therefore the enjoyment of him then will give them full ſatisfaction. So the Pſalmiſt joins theſe circumſtances together in his proſpect of the other life, Pſal. xvii. 15. "As for me, I will (or ſhall) behold thy face in righteouſneſs: I ſhall be ſatisfied when I awake with thy likeneſs." In the ſame manner St. John ſpeaks of our future condition, 1. John iii. 2. "We know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him; for we ſhall ſee him as he is." But obſerve how thereupon he infers the neceſſity of preſent aſpirings and endeavours after a reſemblance of divine purity, in all the expectants of heaven, ver. 3. "And every man, that hath this hope in him, purifieth himſelf,

himself, even as he is pure;" i. e. Every man, who makes heaven his hope and real desire in this justest view of it, as a state of likeness to God, and of the nearest enjoyment of him; cannot fail to have a prevailing and a growing relish for purity now.

Let us all then, by way of application, seriously enquire what the temper of our own souls is in reference to the subject we are upon. The vast moment and importance of it appears from what has been last offered. And upon enquiry, we shall either see reason to judge that an impure spirit prevails in us; or to hope that our hearts are in a good measure made clean: and even then, we shall hardly fail to discern great defects in our purification in a higher or lower degree.

If you see reason but to fear that an impure spirit hath the dominion; seriously consider what a holy God must judge of you: he can look upon you no otherwise than as altogether *alienated* from him, and *from the life of God*; of a temper most opposite to his nature and will. And can you think that *for these things he will* not *bring you into judgment?* That he will not call his reasonable creature to a severe account for so base a prostitution of his noble powers? Especially a reasonable creature under the Gospel, which contains the strongest engagements, and proposes the most effectual assistance for recovering impure souls? Can you entertain the least hope of standing in the judgment, when you are to be judged by the Gospel? And yet, how far soever your impurities have proceeded,

ed, if you are awakened to a ſerious conviction of your ſin and danger, deſpair not either of a cure or of a pardon, if you take the courſe preſcribed in the Goſpel. It is left upon record, for encouragement to the chief of ſinners, when they are awakened; that the apoſtle, after he had reckoned upon ſome of the groſſeſt ſenſualities, and declared that they would certainly exclude from the kindom of God; yet plainly ſignifies, that he only means this without repentance; and immediately gives inſtances of the effectual recovery even of ſuch offenders, 1 Cor. vi. 11. "Such were ſome of you; but ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified, in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our God." Here is a ſufficient proviſion for all the waſhing that even *you* need, for your ſanctification by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and for your juſtification and pardon, through the blood of Chriſt. Here were ſouls ſunk into the loweſt impurity, but effectually relieved in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our God: And theſe will be as effectual for your relief. But what courſe muſt be taken in order to your being waſhed by theſe means? Apply to God by earneſt prayer. The text directs you to go to God, and ſay, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Go with the humble ſerious cry of the publican, "God be merciful to me a ſinner," Luke xviii. 13. Go with the prodigal ſon, acknowledge your guilt and unworthineſs, and ſay, "Make me as one of thy hired ſervants," Luke xv. 18, 19. And in depend-

dependance on the grace which God has so many ways encouraged you to ask, set yourselves to break off your sins by repentance: "Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Awake from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light;" Eph. v. 14.

If you can justly hope, that purification is begun in the heart and life; adore divine grace, which has made you to differ, and has plucked you as brands out of the burning. If, by God's blessing upon a pious education, you have grown to a sincere abhorrence of impurity, without any remarkable sallies of youth by the way; you have particular reason to be thankful for this, as it has prevented many miseries to soul and body in this life, which give no small uneasiness to some other converts. If you are recovered from a sensual course; yet the happy change of your circumstances should greatly affect you, while you see so many around you proceed in the way to destruction to their lives end. Aspire after greater and higher measures of purity, still endeavouring farther to "cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit." And remember, that the hopes you have of your present state should not make you secure; but "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." The case in the text, of a man so eminently good before, is a standing admonition against security.

If you have fallen into any sensualities since you came to the knowledge of the truth, David's example in this Psalm will give you proper directions of conduct. There must be

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particular and ſolemn repentance anſwerable to the aggravating circumſtances which attend ſuch a ſin in you. You ſhould not be eaſy, till at leaſt you recover the ground you have loſt, both in your holineſs and your comfort: And if you have "cauſed the enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme," you have all the reaſon in the world to ſubmit, as David did, to any penal rebukes of God for it, in any way which he takes to vindicate his own honour; and to do all you can for the ſame purpoſe, by a repentance as public as your offences.

And as the beſt have reaſon to own the imperfection of their purity in the preſent ſtate, though they are kept from the greater tranſgreſſions; ſo the have reaſon to walk humbly with God, daily to review and make up their accounts with him, to be always upon their guard againſt greater offences; and while they dwell in the body, to purſue the work of mortifying the deeds of it.

To cloſe all: The young have peculiar reaſon to reckon this ſubject to concern them. The evils I am cautioning againſt, are by way of eminency *youthful luſts*. That age of life is more than any other addicted to impurities; and therefore the guard ſhould be anſwerable. On the other hand, it may truly be ſaid to be a crime more aggravated in thoſe advanced in years, if they ſhould retain the ſame vicious turn of mind; and it is poſſible, that they may have a moſt impure heart, even when they have outlived the ſerviceableneſs of their bodies to the dictates of a car-

nal mind. Young and old are concerned in this ſubject, and ſhould often make this prayer.

SERMON V.

TEMPERANCE.

LUKE xxi. 34.

Take heed to yourſelves, leſt at any time your hearts be overcharged with ſurfeiting, and drunkenneſs, and cares of this life, and ſo that day come upon you unawares.

IN theſe words it may be proper to obſerve,

1. The perſon who ſpoke them; Chriſt himſelf, our Lord and Maſter, the author and finiſher of our faith: which at firſt view claims a peculiar regard to them from all who wear his name. They contain one of his ſolemn commands, which he eſteemed of great importance to be inculcated; and therefore I hope that no Chriſtian will think himſelf unconcerned in them, or that they are an unfit ſubject of Goſpel-preaching.

2. The perſons to whom they were peculiarly directed. Chriſt ſpoke them to his own diſciples. Many of his diſcourſes were delivered to them and the multitude promiſcuouſly;

ly: But what we have in this chapter, was the subject of a conference between him and his professed disciples alone. St. Luke indeed only observes of the rise of this discourse, ver. 5. that *some*, without any mark of distinction, *spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones*, &c. and that upon Christ's foretelling the utter desolation of it, *they* (the same persons, whoever they were) *asked him when these things should be*, &c. ver. 7. But St. Matthew in his parallel account informs us, Matt. xxiv. 1. that they were *his disciples*: And ver. 3. that *his disciples came unto him privately*, and put their questions to him. St. Mark is yet more particular in their names, that Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew *asked him* those things *privately*, Mark xiii. 3. I observe this to shew, that such an admonition concerns all, so it is not unsuitable to Christ's professed disciples. If Christ saw fit to leave such a caution with his apostles; then, if we would take his judgment, the best of men should think themselves concerned even in warnings against sensuality. Thus the apostle to the Colossians, after he had expressed his charitable hope that they "were risen with Christ," Col. iii. 1. yet directs an exhortation to the same persons, not merely to guard against sins of infirmity, but to "mortify their members which are upon earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, and covetousness," ver. 5.

3. The exhortation contained in the words to a care and concern about yourselves: "Take heed to yourselves." Such an exhortation

hortation is laid down in the New Teſtament upon ſeveral occaſions. It imports in general the peculiar care we are obliged to take of ourſelves, more than of any beſide. It intimates alſo the matter, introduced with ſo ſolemn a caution, to be of great importance; and at the ſame time, our proneneſs to behave ill in ſuch a matter without care and diligence. And all this we are to underſtand by it here.

4. The general matter, with reference to which we are directed to exerciſe our care for ourſelves: "Leſt our hearts be overcharged." Our Saviour teaches us to be mainly careful of our principal part, our ſouls; and particularly, that they be not rendered unfit for their proper and moſt excellent acts by too great an aſcendant of the body, and its concerns over them. The word which we render *overcharged*, Βαρυνθῶσιν, ſignifies to *be preſſed down*, as a man is held down by more weight upon him than he can wield; or as a ſhip, by being overloaded, is made unfit to ſail. So it ought to be our concern, that our ſouls, which are capable of tending upward, and were deſigned to do ſo, might not be held groveling below by too much of earthly weight upon them: that they ſhould not be hindered from acting worthy of their ſpiritual and excellent nature, by too much indulgence of the body. One of our principal cares, while we dwell in the body, ſhould be, that our minds may be preſerved free for their own moſt worthy employments.

5. The inſtances mentioned whereby our minds

minds are eminently in danger of being overcharged. And they are of two sorts.

One is, the inordinate gratifications of the appetite by intemperance: Lest your hearts be overcharged "with surfeiting and drunkenness;" that is by the immoderate use either of meats or drinks: making more free with either, than is consistent with the proper place of the body, namely, to be under the direction and command of the soul.

The other is immoderate cares about the concerns of this life. The mind may be as much indisposed and unfitted for regular acting, and for attending to our principal interest, by too great a variety of worldly cares, or by too intense anxiety about them, as even by surfeiting and drunkenness. The sober actings of reason about our principal interests, may be as much disturbed by the one as by the other.

6. The extent in which this caution is prescribed: *Lest at any time ye be* so *overcharged.*

It is worst of all to have this for the case of our souls in customary and habitual practice; but that is not all which we are to provide against. We should be on our guard against every particular discomposure either by worldly appetites or cares; for every such instance makes a man a transgressor, and is not a little detrimental to his soul.

This addition also may intimate, that they who think themselves best fortified against such disorders, or to have little temptation to them, yet may at some time or other be sur-

priſed, if they take not heed to themſelves. Who could be imagined to have leſs occaſion for a caution againſt intemperance, than theſe diſciples of Chriſt, who by their conſtant attendance on their maſter were accuſtomed to a very regular way of living? Or whom ſhould one think leſs in danger of immoderate cares than plain fiſhermen, who had little to care for except to keep their nets in order? Yet Chriſt ſaw it proper to admoniſh them, leſt at ſome time they might be led by temptation to thoſe evils, of which they might have no apprehenſion at preſent that they were in any danger. And the ſame caution we ſhould all take to ourſelves.

7. The particular motive by which Chriſt awakened his diſciples to this care and caution: "Take heed leſt your hearts be overcharged——and ſo that day come upon you unawares."

He had in the context acquainted his diſciples with the ſore deſtruction which was coming upon the Jewiſh temple and nation; one of the ſevereſt judgments ever inflicted by God in this world. And in the text he calls his diſciples to be very vigilant, that they might not miſcarry in ſo dreadful a calamity, by indulging themſelves in exceſs and luxury, or drowning their thoughts in worldly cares. Either of theſe would lead them to forget that awful ſeaſon, though they were fore-warned of it, and hinder their preparation for it; and indeed be a very unſuitable frame to be found in when ſuch judgment ſhould come.

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But though Christ's warning to his disciples of that day was with a particular view to to that national judgment upon the Jews; yet, as that was a type of the last judgment approaching to us all, we are equally obliged to attend to the same caution in prospect of death and the future judgment, lest those days come upon us at unawares. Mark tells us that when Christ had upon this occasion called his disciples to watchfulness in particular, he then actually extended it to all, Mark xiii. 37. "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." And that particular part of watchfulness contained in the text, must be understood in the same latitude.

I intend upon this text to discourse only of the head of intemperance. Immoderate cares will come under consideration in the next branch of my general subject, *Christian Contentment.* I am now to prosecute this truth,

That Christians are strongly obliged to maintain a strict guard against intemperance.

Where I shall, I. Shew what is to be accounted intemperance. And, II. The obligations that lie upon Christians to keep a strict guard against it.

I. What is to be accounted intemperance.

And here I doubt not but you will easily apprehend, that I am not inquiring only after the grossest acts of this vice, such as justly expose a man to the common censure of all that see him, or to be pointed at in the streets for a glutton or a drunkard; but also after all that, which a man judging of himself impar-

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tially by the rules of reaſon and ſcripture, and as in the ſight of God, will have ground to account a criminal exceſs in this matter, though other people ſhould have no foundation to paſs a cenſure upon him.

Now I know not a more comprehenſive rule of judgment in this caſe than that which is intimated in the text. All ſuch uſe of bodily proviſions, whereby "the heart is overcharged," or the mind is indiſpoſed for its regular acts, or rendered any way leſs fit for acting as a rational and religious agent; this is in proportion a faulty exceſs. And by this rule, beſides the groſs acts of intemperance, conſcience may tell us, that every one of the following inſtances infringe upon the grace of temperance.

1. All ſuch uſe of meats and drinks, as indiſpoſes the body to be at the ſervice of the ſoul. The body was deſigned by our Creator to be the miniſter of the ſoul, and in a readineſs to execute the orders of the higher powers: and the proviſions given for our ſuſtenance, are intended by the bleſſing of God with them, to maintain the body in ſuch a ſtate. Whatever therefore we find prejudicial to our health, or that ordinarily has the effect to make our bodies heavy, ſluggiſh and unactive; whether it be ſome particular kinds of food or liquor, or ſuch a proportion and quantity of any, certainly ought to be abſtained from, becauſe we find them to diſorder the juſt temperature of the body, and ſo to leſſen its fitneſs to ſerve our minds. Indeed we can hardly judge of this for one another: for that

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is eminently fit to nouriſh and refreſh ſome conſtitutions, which is moſt prejudicial to others; and ſome require ſuch a quantity of ſuſtenance to preſerve their bodies in a regular and vigorous ſtate, as would quite diſorder and unfit others for their duty. But moſt people may, if they pleaſe, judge of this for themſelves: and temperance obliges every man, upon the beſt obſervation he can make of himſelf, ordinarily to abſtain from thoſe ſupports of life, for quality or for quantity, which he finds a diſſervice, inſtead of an advantage, to the good ſtate of his body. If our bodies are rendered unſerviceable, either in whole or in part, by the providence of God without our own fault, we cannot help that; it is our affliction, and not our ſin. But if we ſhould knowingly diſable ourſelves, we not only ſin againſt our own bodies, but our own ſouls too. And indeed we are ſo many ways liable to diſorders which we cannot help, that we have no need to increaſe them by our own follies.

2. Such ways of living as are above what our worldly circumſtances will admit, may juſtly be eſteemed intemperance. High-living, above peoples condition and eſtate, either in the daintineſs of their proviſion, or the plenty of them, is intemperance in them, though it may not deſerve to be ſo accounted in thoſe of better circumſtances. It is going beyond the mean which they ſhould fix to themſelves, and is too often the occaſion of great injuries done to their neighbour; and, which brings it under the rule of the text, it unneceſſarily

unneceſſarily over-charges their hearts with care how to extricate themſelves out of difficulties, which were entirely owing to their own prodigality.

3. Such an application to indulge the appetite as robs men of much of their time, not only frequently makes them to ſuffer in their ſecular affairs, but wrongs their ſouls too. Though reaſon ſhould not be diſturbed, nor health impaired; though the head ſhould be "ſtrong to drink wine," and the eſtate able to bear it; yet this alone is a breach upon temperance, to "tarry long at the wine," Prov. xxiii. 30. For it makes a buſineſs of that which ought to be no more than a refreſhment, and a preparation for buſineſs. Eſpecially if by this means men keep ſuch unſeaſonable hours at home, that either family-worſhip or their ſecret devotions are ſhut out, or they or their families are already become ſo drowſy and indiſpoſed, that they can at beſt only do the work of the Lord negligently. When this is the caſe, the ſpiritual intereſts of themſelves and of theirs is greatly obſtructed.

4. All ſuch gratifications of appetite, as diſturb and leſſen, though they do not entirely take away the exerciſe of reaſon. The only commendable uſe of outward refreſhments, is either to ſupport the body in its daily neceſſities, or to recruit and refreſh the animal ſpirits when dull and heavy; that ſo the mind, which is nearly allied to the body in which it dwells, and apt to ſhare in all its indiſpoſitions, may become fitter for the ſervice of God and man. All compliances with appe-

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tite thus far, are not only lawful but praiſe-worthy: but every ſtep we go knowingly beyond this, is faulty. I wiſh this charge may not extend too far among thoſe who pretend to ſobriety. If you cannot allow yourſelves entirely to dethrone reaſon, and to transform the man into a beaſt, as the open drunkard does; if other people cannot charge you with tranſgreſſing the bounds of temperance, or diſcover any alteration in you for the worſe; yet are you never conſcious to yourſelves, that you ſuffer reaſon to be muddled, and your thoughts to be more confuſed, inſtead of being more free? That though you have not loſt the uſe of your better powers, yet you cannot uſe them ſo well as at other times? That you are neither equally fit for uſeful converſation, nor for the ſervice of God, nor for application to your proper buſineſs. If this ſhould be your caſe, though the guilt of it comes not up to the more notorious and ſcandalous inſtances of intemperance; yet ſurely conſcience can hardly fail to admoniſh you in ſerious hours, that it is amiſs. And if ſuch a practice as this ſhould be frequent and habitual with you, I cannot but apprehend it more heinous in the ſight of God, than a ſingle act of the groſſeſt intemperance; into which a man is ſurpriſed quite contrary to his uſual character.

5. All ſuch uſe of proviſions for the body, as is known uſually to excite criminal and impure inclinations. Either ſuch kinds of proviſion as people have experienced to have ſuch an effect upon themſelves, or ſuch a meaſure

ſure and quantity. Certainly, where this is found to be the caſe, it is not conſiſtent with temperance, to take the ſame freedom in the uſe of thoſe proviſions, as of others; or as other people may do in the uſe of the ſame things without danger, becauſe they find no ſuch effect from them. This every man who tenders his own ſoul, and the maintenance of his purity, ſtands obliged to, by the general precept, "not to make proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof," Rom. xiii. 14.

6. Such ſtudied and cuſtomary gratifications of appetite, as tend to ſettle the ſpirit in a ſenſual frame, or a ſtrong turn and addictedneſs toward bodily ſatisfactions, ſhould not be eſteemed harmleſs things by a Chriſtian. "The carnal mind is enmity againſt God," and finds a Chriſtian work for conflict all his days; and while he feeds his body, it ſhould be his endeavour as little as may be to feed that. This makes frequent and high feaſting, though it ſhould not be attended with any of the bad conſequences already mentioned, yet to be inexpedient and dangerous for moſt people. Though all feaſting is not unlawful, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew preſently; yet I doubt there are very few, who make a frequent practice of it, who, like the rich man in the parable, *fare ſumptuouſly* almoſt *every day*, Luke, xvi. 19. but muſt own, if conſcience may ſpeak freely, that they put their minds out of frame, give too ſtrong a bent to ſenſible good, and abate the edge of their deſire and delight with reference to ſpiritual and eternal bleſſings. Now whatever hath that effect,

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is so far an enemy, and should not be indulged by a man that values the prosperity of his soul.

II. I proceed to shew the obligations which lie upon Christians, to maintain a strict guard against intemperance.

1. The Gospel recommends temperance as a matter of great importance in Christianity. We have many precepts about it. As our Lord and Master here strongly enjoins it, so the apostle; "Be not filled with wine," Eph. v. 18. It is inculcated upon us from the clear light of the Gospel which we enjoy; Rom. xiii. 13. "Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness." 1 Thess. v. 5—8. "Ye are all children of the light, and the children of the day: We are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober: For they that sleep, sleep in in the night; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. But let us who are of the day be sober." When the apostle mentions it as a common observation even concerning the heathen world, that those among them, who were drunken, were drunken in the night; it reflects the greatest shame upon the present degenerate manners of too many in christian lands, who are not ashamed to be disordered at noon-day, as well as in the noon-day light of the Gospel. The excessive indulgence of appetite in the primitive times is spoken of, as the character of people before their conversion, but which they were under the clearest engagements to change upon their

entertaining the Gospel; 1 Pet. iv. 3. "The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquettings, and abominable idolatries." These sensualities were chiefly practised by them, as attendants of the profane and impure festivals of their false gods; and therefore when they turned to God from idols, they should drop all these sinful indulgences also. For *the grace of God, which hath* now *appeared to all men, teaches us* in the first place *to live soberly*, Tit. ii. 11, 12. *Drunkenness and revellings* are *works of the flesh*, Gal. v. 21. which therefore *they that are Christs have crucified*, ver. 24. Therefore the drunkard is to be excluded from christian communion, 1 Cor. v. 11. "I have written to you, if any one that is called a brother be—a drunkard—with such one, no not to eat." It is observable, that the sacred historian intimates temperance to be an eminent part of the doctrine of the gospel, when he tells us, Acts xxiv 24. that Felix *heard* Paul *concerning the faith in Christ.* And what was that? We have an account of no more of his discourse upon the subject, but that *he reasoned* with him *of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*, ver. 25. the apostle chusing out those parts of the christian doctrine for his discourse with Felix which were most suitable to his sins and circumstances.

2. We have lively representations in the word of God, of the danger and mischief of intemperance.

We

We are put in mind of those bad effects for this world, which so often follow it. The ruin of health and estate; the quarrels and contentions it often excites to the prejudice of others, and often to mens own destruction. That "the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty," Prov. xxiii. 21. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixt wine," ver. 29, 30.

It is big with innumerable other sins; the parent especially of impurities. "Be not filled with wine, wherein is excess," or unbridled dissolution of manners. It is mentioned as one fruit of tarrying long at the wine, Prov. xxiii. 33. "Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things." It often prompts to do others the most extravagant injuries: and though in human courts of judicature it is often admitted for a plea in abatement of such crimes, that a man was disordered with liquor when he did them; yet I very much doubt, how far they will be allowed at God's tribunal for an extenuation, as long as men were fore-warned of such consequences, as possible and probable to insue upon intemperance, and were cautioned against it from that consideration.

It is eminently of a hardening nature, and tends to make conscience insensible and stupified. "Whoredom and wine, and new wine take away the heart," Hos. iv. 11. It makes men forget the law of God, Prov. xxxi. 5. They

They are not only unteachable while in an act of intemperance; but commonly frequent acts sear the conscience, and render them unapt for impression even at other times.

And, as the fruit of all, without solemn repentance, it will certainly exclude from the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 15. This quickened holy Paul to the utmost guard and caution over his bodily appetites; 1 Cor. ix. 27. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

3. The bounty and goodness of God, in granting us the comforts of life, and leave to use them as far as is for our real good and safety, is an argument to gratitude, not to abuse his favour.

He "gives us all things richly to enjoy," 1 Tim. vi. 17. and shall we employ the fruits of his rich beneficence to his dishonour, and to our own hurt? How justly then may he resume his own forfeited gifts? "take away his corn in the time thereof, and his wine in the season thereof?" as he threatened to do to Israel, Hos. ii. 9.

He allows us not only the necessaries of life, but all reasonable conveniences, which we can fairly come by: A vast variety of creatures for our food, and wine in its season to *make glad the heart*; Psal. civ. 15. He does not confine us to the mere supply of the necessities of nature, but allows a freer use of his creatures in proper time and measure. All

feasting

feasting is not forbidden. There were sacred feasts of divine appointment under the law, wherein the people were to rejoice before the Lord every year, and to partake of the bounties of providence with a sober freedom. And there were feasts among good men in those times upon civil occasions: as Lot's, when he entertained the angel at unawares; and Abraham's, at the weaning of Isaac. We find the Lord Jesus himself countenancing a marriage-feast with his presence, and by working a miracle to supply their want of wine, in John ii. Feasting therefore is not unlawful in itself, when it is managed in the fear of God, with sobriety, and in due time and place. All that God forbids us, is to unman ourselves, and to do our souls an injury.

Besides this, under the Gospel our charter is inlarged from what it was under the law; all the ceremonial distinction of meats being abolished, and our liberty by that means extended to a greater variety. Therefore an intemperate abuse of our liberty to licentiousness, must be more criminal under the Gospel; when we are taught, that "God hath created" all sorts of "meats to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth; for every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; being sanctified by the word of God, and prayer," 1 Tim. iv. 3—5. that is, being warranted to use it by the word of God, if we do not forget to acknowledge God in it by prayer and praise. Now how ungrateful shall we be, if we cannot satisfy ourselves

with the regular use of so large a supply? Like our first parents, who could not be content without the forbidden fruit, though they were allowed the use of every other tree in the garden.

4. The Gospel directs us to a better use of our superfluities, which will redound very much to our own advantage; that is to relieve the necessitous with what we can spare ourselves: And this inforced with a declaration of the high honour which our Master will put upon such services, Matth. xx. 45. "I was an hungred and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink," &c. "For," as in ver. 40 "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And shall we ruin our souls by an intemperate use of those things, with which we might lay up a good security for the time to come?

5. The example of Christ in this matter lays a strong engagement upon Christians. He was not indeed, as he takes notice himself, Matth. xi. 18, 19. "like John the Baptist, who came neither eating nor drinking;" that is, not as other men do, but using a very spare and peculiar diet. But Christ "came eating and drinking," that is, using such a diet as other sober people were wont to do, and conversing freely with all sorts for their good. His His malicious enemies indeed called him for this, "a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners;" but most injuriously. As he was designed for a common example, he was the fitter for it by living in

in the common manner, as far as innocence would allow: and so he did, but never exceeded the bounds of strict regulation. He was sometimes at feasts; and thereby teaches us, that not only to support, but moderately to delight the body by eating and drinking, is not at all times unseemly for a Christian: but then he maintained strict sobriety, and spent not such seasons in mere vanity and levity, but pursued his general end of doing good, especially to the souls of men; as we have a remarkable instance in the profitable instructions which he took occasion to deliver, when he was present at an entertainment upon the invitation of a Pharisee, Luke xiv. He did not make feasts his ordinary choice; but commonly lived upon plain provisions; and ever by his example recommended to his disciples, what he prescribes in the text by his doctrine, never to have his heart overcharged or hindered in his work by the refreshments of the body.

6. Intemperance will put us into the worst posture for Christ's coming to death and judgment. Who would not be afraid and ashamed to meet him in such an act of sin? And when we have such great events before us, and the time of them is ever uncertain, this thought should always be an effectual restraint from irregular indulgencies. *The old world*, Christ tells us, *were eating and drinking*, that is, luxuriously, *till the flood came*, and swept them away, Matth, xxiii. 38. Oh the dreadful surprize! And so he intimates it will be with many at his own coming; "who

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ſhall ſay in their hearts, The Lord delayeth his coming," and ſo embolden themſelves to "eat and drink with the drunken," ver. 48, 49. But ſurely we ſhould tremble at the thought of being found in the number, conſidering what follows, ver. 50, 51. "The Lord of that ſervant ſhall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and ſhall cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth." Intemperance is in itſelf one of the worſt preparations to bid him welcome; and at the ſame time it hinders men in every other branch of preparation, it induces them to put the evil day from them, till it come at unawares.

Be perſuaded then, as Chriſt exhorts to "take heed to yourſelves" in this matter, leſt at any time you ſhould exceed proper bounds in the indulgence of appetite. Many in this city are in peculiar danger, by the frequent occaſions of feaſting in the city companies, as well as in their own and their friends houſes, and eſpecially* at this ſeaſon of leiſure and more cuſtomary freedoms. I believe you would find it your wiſdom at all times to attend to the following directions.

Maintain a fixed deteſtation of intemperance, even the loweſt degrees of it; as a thing unworthy of the dignity of your natures, vaſtly prejudicial to the intereſts of ſoul and body, highly diſpleaſing to God, and peculiarly aggravated by the chriſtian light and privileges you enjoy.

* This was preached Decemb. 30, 1722.

Avoid

Avoid as much as you can the ſociety of the intemperate; at leaſt make them not your choſen companions, Prov. xxiii. 20. "Be not among wine-bibbers, amongſt riotous eaters of fleſh." Bad company in this, as in all other caſes, is moſt pernicious; it leads people by degrees in complianee to evils of which once they never thought. Scarce any are led at firſt by themſelves to intemperance, but by ſome evil companions.

Allow not yourſelves to proceed to the utmoſt bounds of things lawful. There is but a ſtep between that and being tranſgreſſors in this as well as other matters; and the tranſition is eaſy, and very likely to be made at one time or other, if we often venture to a precipice.

When you fall into the way of that which you know to be enſnaring, be peculiarly on your guard. That is the meaning of the direction, Prov. xxiii. 2. "Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite." A man would not be eager of the richeſt dainties with a knife at his throat: ſo when we are aware of a peculiar temptation, we ſhould repreſent it to ourſelves to awaken fear of tranſgreſſing, leſt our "table ſhould become our ſnare." And in ver. 31. "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itſelf aright." If you know appetite is apt to be too hard for you, you need not call imagination to its aſſiſtance.

Take heed of giving way to the beginnings of intemperance. It inſenſibly ſteals on to higher

higher degrees, and grows upon thoſe who give it entrance. Sad inſtances I believe may be recollected within the knowledge of moſt, of perſons once in appearance of the ſtricteſt ſobriety and regularity, who from ſmall beginnings, which were not reſtrained at firſt, have ſunk into the moſt perfect ſottiſhneſs and ſenſuality, and been entirely loſt to God, the world, and themſelves. Intemperance eats like a canker, and too often increaſes with age; which ſhould make young people eſpecially very cautious of the leaſt degrees of it.

And eſpecially ſee that you keep up in your ſouls the life and power of religion; that your time and thoughts be well employed, that you may not be under the temptation of having recourſe to ſenſual indulgencies to paſs away your time. "Be ſober, putting on the breaſt-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of ſalvation," 1 Theſſ. v. 8. Making uſe of your faith, and love, and hope, to fortify you againſt every allurement to intemperance. And *be filled with the Spirit*: For *if ye walk in the Spirit*, attending to and following his gracious influences, *ye ſhall not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh*. Gal. v. 16.

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SERMON VI.

Christian Contentment.

PHIL. iv. 11. the latter part.

——*I have learned in whatsoever state I am,* therewith *to be content.*

IT is a considerable branch of the duty which we owe to God and to ourselves, to have our affection to present enjoyments so moderated, that whether we have them or want them, whether we have a larger or a less share in them, we may yet enjoy God and ourselves.——This is the contentment which the apostle could say in the text that he had attained. And a great thing it was, even for an excellent saint to be able to say so.

He let the Philipians know, in ver. 10 with what pleasure he received their kind contribution for the relief of his necessities. But then he was careful to acquaint them, that he meant not by this to intimate, that he had been discontented before at the straitness of his circumstances, ver. 11. *Not that I speak in respect of want:* I can undergo even that, and yet be tolerably easy. *For I have learned in whatsoever state I am,* therewith *to be content.* "My mind can be competently suited

"to

" to my condition, if my condition happen " not in all reſpects to be ſuited to my mind."

This is a very eminent part of the chriſtian temper, wherein we ſhould all aſpire to be able to ſay the ſame thing with the bleſſed apoſtle. And in the proſecution of the ſubject, I would, I. Explain this diſpoſition of mind. And, II. Shew how it may be learned.

I. This diſpoſition of mind is to be explained: To be content in whatſoever ſtate we are.

I have already hinted, that the apoſtle only means this with reference to any ſort of outward condition for this world. That is the proper province for contentment. It would ill become a man to ſay, " In whatever ſtate " *my ſoul* is, whether it be under the reign of " ſin or of grace, whether it be in a ſtate of " acceptance with God, or under his wrath, " yet I am content." This is really the temper of too many thoughtleſs ſinners: But it is very far from being commendable. All God's calls and warnings are deſigned to awaken them out of this ſecurity; that they may never reſt contented, till they are in a ſafe ſtate for eternity. Nor would it be much more proper for a good man to ſay, " I am " content with the degrees of conformity to " God, and of victory over my irregular in- " clinations which are already obtained." It is certain St. Paul was of quite another frame, as he declares in this ſame epiſtle, chap. iii. 13, 14. " Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which

which are before, I preſs towards the mark." He means no more in the text but this, that he was prepared to exerciſe contentment whether he was in a high or low condition in this world.

But what is this contentment in every ſtate?

The words here uſed, *αὐταρκης εἶναι*, and *αὐταρκεία*, which is uſed in another place for contentment, ſtrictly imports a ſelf-ſufficiency. Which can by no means be underſtood, when applied to any creature, in ſeparation from God, in whom all our ſprings are: but it imports a tranquility of mind, which does not abſolutely depend upon the things of the world; but that whatever our outward condition is, our minds can have a foundation for reſt and compoſure.

It would run too high for Chriſtian contentment, to take a full ſatisfaction in any earthly eſtate; to take up our reſt in it, though it ſhould be the beſt and moſt advantageous to our outward man; ſo as to have no lively deſires after a better ſtate; but to be ready to ſay, It is good to be here; I would live here always, if I might have my option. The frame here recommended, is not to be content with any ſtate upon earth as our portion. St. Paul in the third chapter of this epiſtle, deſcribes men of that character, who ſo *mind* and affect *earthly things*, as *enemies of the croſs of Chriſt*; and in oppoſition to them, gives it as the character of himſelf and other Chriſtians, "Our converſation is in heaven," ver. 19, 20.

On the other hand, it is not inconsistent with the grace of contentment, to have a sense of any thing ungrateful or uneasy in our present lot. To be without that, would be stupidity, and not contentment. Nor will every desire, or regular endeavour to better our outward circumstances, be an argument of discontent. Such desires are the foundation of diligence and industry in mens callings, which serves so many good purposes in the world: and God himself encourages men, by temporal promises to diligence, to make the improvement of their worldly condition a subordinate end of their labours.

But true christian contentment with our state and lot, comprehends in it such things as these:

1. That our desires of worldly good are low and moderate. That we are not eager after much, nor seek great things for ourselves; but that our desires be reduced within the bounds of necessity and reasonable convenience, or at least are not hot and impetuous after more. To this the apostle exhorts, 1 Tim. vi. 8. "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content:" that is, let us be able to acquiesce and be easy, though we should be allowed no more. We find Jacob forming his desires with such moderation, at his setting out in the world; and when he was to enter upon a journey of some length and distance from his father's house, he asked not riches and grandeur, but that "God would give him bread to eat, and raiment to put on," Gen. xxviii. 20. And it will be the wisdom

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and happiness of other young people to set out in the world, without mounting their desires very high; at least with a resolution to be easy, though they should be able to compass no more than a subsistence. A man that cannot be easy with that, knows not in truth what would make him easy; for covetousness is insatiable. We see people arriving at one enjoyment after another, which once seemed the top of their ambition; and yet so far from contentment, that their desires grow faster than their substance; and they are as eager to improve a good estate when they are become masters of it, as if they were still drudging for food and raiment. Christ warns us against this sort of covetousness, which consists in insatiable desires, Luke xii. 15. "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." In the parable which immediately succeeds this caution, the rich fool, whom Christ describes and blames, is charged with no injustices or evil practices, but only with insatiable desires of abundance, and too intense a concern to lay up goods for many years. The apostle exhorts the Hebrews, Heb. xiii. 5. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have:" τοις παρουσιν, *present things.* Till we arrive at such a temper, that we can be content and easy with what we have at present, covetousness is predominant; and the same principle will keep us uneasy in any future circumstances, when they may become present,

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2. That in all our views of bettering our worldly condition, we indulge not immoderate cares. A prudent care of our affairs becomes us as reasonable creatures and as Christians; but a contented mind will not allow us to overdo herein. And we may overdo, either by engaging in a greater variety of cares, than we can manage with composure of mind, and in consistence with our other duties; or by suffering any particular cares to run out into anxiety.

Some, from their eager desire of gain, drown themselves in such a variety and hurry of business, as is beyond their capacity and head to manage. Such a conduct generally defeats its own end, and issues in disappointment and loss for this world. But especially, it is prejudicial to mens souls; either not leaving them reasonable time to attend to their better interest; or following them into their reading, and hearing, and praying, so that they cannot perform them without great distraction of thought; or presently wearing off any good impression made upon their spirits. Our Saviour cautions his disciples against this, as well as intemperance, Luke xxi. 34. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." And if it concerns us to take heed lest this should be the case *at any time*, what must be the mischief and danger of a perpetual hurry of worldly business; when men launch out beyond their

their depth, and possibly cannot retreat and disengage themselves when they will?

Others, though they may not enter upon an undue multiplicity of business, yet are intemperately solicitous about that in which they do engage; that is, about the issue and success of their projects and endeavours. They are not satisfied with having acted the proper and prudent part incumbent on them, and then to leave the event to God; but torment and rack their minds about that which is not in their own power. This is that sort of "taking thought for the morrow," against which our Saviour cautions, Mat. vi. 34. And that sinful carefulness, from which the apostle dehorts us, Phil. iv. 6. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Anxiety is an evident mark of discontent, and will be a certain hindrance to contentment in any condition, as long as it is indulged.

3. That whatever our present condition be, we chearfully submit to the providence of God in it, in opposition to all murmuring complaints of him, though our lot should be strait and uneasy. Christian contentment essentially includes in it a respect to divine providence in all our circumstances, and a humble acquiescence in the disposals of it. If we fret against the Lord, because things are not according to our mind, we fly in the face of the great governor of the world; and instead of helping ourselves, shall vastly increase our difficulty, by making him our enemy. But

when we have uprightly done our part, whatever the event be, it becomes us to say with Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." If any comfort, which may appear desirable in itself, is denied us, there should be a placid submission upon the foot of what Jacob told Rachel, when she was discontented for the want of children, Gen. xxx. 2. "God hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb." It was a truth which became a better mouth than that of Balak, when he said to Balaam, Numb. xxiv. 11. "The Lord hath kept thee back from honour;" And it should be a quieting thought to good men whenever they are disappointed in such expectations. If you have not that success by an industrious application to business, as others around you have; it should be a thought present with you, "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up," 1 Sam. ii. 7. Contentment, as a grace, includes in it this regard to God.

4. That we are so easy with our own lot, as not to envy others who may be in more prosperous circumstances. Envy is an infallible mark of discontent. Duty to God and charity to our neighbours would induce us to take pleasure in the welfare of others, whether we immediately share in it or not. A contented mind upon the principles of religion, would naturally fall into such reflections as these, if we see other men possessed of a larger affluence of comfots than we; "The love "or hatred of God are not known by such

"things

"things as these. If our more prosperous "neighbours should be bad men, their *riches* "may be *to their hurt*, and *the prosperity of* "*fools* may *destroy them*. If they be good "men, God, who knows what is best for eve- "ry one, may know it safer for them to be "intrusted with such comforts, than it would "be for us; that they may be great mercies "to them, and yet would prove too strong "temptations for us. Or, if that should not "be the case, yet "shall not God do what he "will with his own?" Or, "shall my eye be "evil against my neighbour because God is "good to him?" Matt. xx. 15. As *charity*, so contentment *envieth not*.

5. That we are so far satisfied with our present condition, whatever it be, that we will not use any unlawful means to better it. It is a certain sign that our minds are not brought down to the pleasure of God in our lot, if we can allow ourselves to go out of God's way in any instance to change it. He that is possessed of the grace of contentment, will not allow himself, whatever inconveniences may accrue to his body, to venture upon the displeasure of God, and the violation of his conscience to remove them. He cannot find in his heart to mend his circumstances by any acts of injustice, or fraud, or violence, or by making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. The apostle opposes to contentment such a disposition that men WILL *be rich*, 1 Tim. vi. 8, 9, 10. They *will* be so at all adventures, whatever it costs them, though they should sacrifice principle and religion, and

and honour to the obtaining of their end. We are told particularly the mischievous effects of such a resolute determination in this case. "They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money," such a love of money, or covetousness, "is the root of all evil; which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." When the Roman soldiers came to John the Baptist, among others that were struck with the novelty of his preaching and baptism, and asked him, "And what shall we do?" John wisely addressed to them suitable to their temptations, with these advices, Luke iii. 14. "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." The soldiers were pinched with their narrow allowance, and too apt to injure other people to make up that defect, either by using violence or false accusations, that they might reap the plunder of other men's goods: John therefore particularly cautions them against these ill ways of providing for themselves; and exhorts them to contentment with the allowance of their station, as an effectual preservation against all such irregular courses.

6. That we make the best of our condition, whatever it may be. We are too prone to cast our eye only upon the dark side of our condition. But a contented man will impartially survey all the circumstances of his lot; and that will soon enable him to discern ma-

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ny things fit to alleviate and balance his uneaſineſs. He will reflect in ſuch a way as this:——"If I have not ſo large a ſhare as "ſome others, yet have I not enough to carry me through the world? If I have not a "large proviſion made for time to come, yet "hath not God hitherto given me my daily "bread, and what occaſion have I to diſtruſt "him for the future? If I have not enough "to gratify every random inclination, yet "have I not ſufficient to ſupply real wants? "If I am denied ſome things which I deſire, "yet is not this the caſe of the great and of "the moſt abounding? If I live more directly upon providence, yet have not goodneſs and mercy followed me all my paſt "days? and why ſhould I doubt, but that "in the way of duty they will follow me all "the days of my life? If I have not every "thing I wiſh for, yet have I not unſpeakably more than I deſerve?" A diſpoſition to contentment readily cheriſhes itſelf with ſuch conſiderations. But it will be proper farther to ſhew,

II. How ſuch a frame is to be learned.

The apoſtle declares that he had learned this. In our preſent depraved ſtate, it is not a temper to which we are naturally diſpoſed: Whether we look into our own hearts or obſerve the world about us, we may eaſily perceive this. Whoever is poſſeſſed of it, is a learner before he attains it. And without doubt the apoſtle means, that he learned it in the ſchool of Chriſt; by laying to heart the principles inculcated by chriſtianity, which

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were sufficient to animate such a temper; by improving every other advantage fit to form him to it; and by the gracious teaching of the divine Spirit, making all successful. Thus he learned it gradually, and became from time to to time a better proficient. So may, so ought we to arrive at such a temper.

1. Christianity sets in view the most solid principles of contentment, and the strongest motives to it. Such as,

The perfections of the blessed God, whose providence disposes our lot. He is just and righteous in all his proceedings. As a perfect being, and the judge of all the earth, he cannot but do right. If we firmly believe this, though we should not be able to account for some particular administrations, yet we shall readily impute that to our own ignorance and narrow views, rather than call in question so indisputable a principle. Whatever occurs, we shall "ascribe righteousness to our Maker," Job xxxvi. 3. His almighty power is another reason to silence every murmur; for what advantage can it be to repine at our lot, when we are entirely in his hand, who "doth whatever pleaseth him in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth," Dan. iv 35. Nor is this absolute power in the hands of a malevolent and unkind being, but one of infinite goodness, who loves his creatures, and consults their good; and has unerring wisdom, to judge in every case and for every person what is best for them. We know not what is good for ourselves in this life; we have often found already, that if

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we had had our own deſires, it muſt have been in anger, and to our real prejudice. What reaſon therefore have we to be content, and even to rejoice, that our times are in God's hands? Chriſt in his ſermon upon the mount, ſtrikes at the root of diſtruſtful and diſcontented cares, by repreſenting the bounty and the wiſdom of providence: the bounty of it, as extending to the meaneſt creatures, to "the fowls of the air," Matt. vi. 26. and the wiſdom of it, in that "our heavenly Father knows what we need," ver. 32.

The relations in which we ſtand to God ſtill enforce the argument to contentment. As we are his creatures, we are rightfully at his diſpoſal. "Woe to him that ſtrives with his Maker. Let the potſherd ſtrive with the potſherds of the earth; ſhall the clay ſay unto him that faſhioneth it, What makeſt thou?" Iſa. liv. 9. We forget our condition and original, if we acquieſce not in the determinations of the Author of our beings. This conſideration, that all is derived from God, compoſed Job into a calm, Job i. 21. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, bleſſed be the name of the Lord." If we conſider ourſelves farther as ſuch who have offended him, and forfeited every benefit, even life itſelf: can there be any juſt reaſon for diſcontent, becauſe we enjoy not all the comforts we can think of? It is grace that we have any left. But eſpecially if we can juſtly hope that we are his children in the moſt diſtinguiſhing ſenſe; this may well reconcile us to any circumſtances of our lot here. If

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we are brought into his family by Christ, so that he is our Father, our Friend, and our God; we have a satisfying portion, how little soever we may enjoy of worldly good; and may justly say with Jacob, Gen. xxxiii 11. I have enough; or, as it is in the Hebrew I have all things: for if God and Christ be ours, all things are ours, as far as God sees that they will conduce to our real interest, 1 Cor. iii. 21. "Distress, or famine, or nakedness, height or depth, shall not separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The fulness and extent of the divine promises is a constant reason for contentment. These are breasts of consolation, from which we may draw refreshment in every state of life; they are either particularly suited to our circumstances, or more generally comprehend them. That one promise of God's being with us, might carry a christian cheerfully through life. Upon this principle the apostle recommends contentment, Heb. iii. 5. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." In the most solitary or mean condition, we cannot be alone, or destitute, if the Father is with us.

The various mercies which actually attend us in every state, if they be observed and seriously meditated upon, will strongly oblige to contentment. We are never in so low and uneasy circumstances in this world, that there are no mixtures of mercy and favour. If we have

have not abundance, yet have we not necessaries? lack we any thing? if we lose some dear relation, yet are not others left? If we have met with some disappointments, yet are we stripped of our all? Have we no instances of a lower and straiter condition than our own? Certainly we must be very ungrateful to God, to overlook the advantageous parts of our lot, because of some circumstances which we should not chuse.

The shortness of our time below, and the approaches of death, loudly speak the reasonableness of contentment with our present condition. A traveller will be contented on the road with the accommodations he meets with, though they should not be the best, upon the prospect that he is going home, where he shall have better; especially if he expects to be soon at home: so a Christian should be easy with his lot in his short pilgrimage through this world; which he knows is shorter compared with eternity, than the longest journey he can undertake compared with the rest of his life on earth. And especially if we consider that we can carry nothing home with us, which will be of service beyond the grave, more than the poorest can. A consideration, by which the apostle enforces contentment with a small allowance by the way, 1 Tim. vi. 7, 8. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And, *or* therefore having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."

If we look into the eternal world before us, the argument will gather farther strength. If

we view the finished misery of sinners that have shot the gulf, who have not so much as a drop of water to cool their tongue; *Wherefore should a living man complain?* a man still among the living, and in the possession of some comforts, who yet is conscious that he deserves to have his lot with the other? On the other hand, if we can entertain hopes of heaven as a state we are designed for, where every want shall be supplied, and where perfect unmixed happiness is ready for us; how unbecoming such expectants is it, to fret at our circumstances in the very short intervening passage?

Finally, the folly and mischief of discontent is fit to be represented to our minds, to fortify them against it. Fretting and uneasiness is not the way to amend our circumstances: which is an argument suggested by our Saviour, Matt. vi. 27. *Which of you by taking thought*, or anxious carefulness, *can add one cubit to his stature?* The word we translate *stature*, signifies indifferently either *stature* or *age*; and accordingly we may understand Christ to intimate that we cannot by carefulness add either to the growth of our bodies, or to the length of our lives; and therefore we should, without anxious solicitude, rely upon God's providence in the way of ordinary industry, for what he sees convenient for us. Discontent is not a likely way to obtain the favour of providence for bettering our condition, nor will it fit us to take the more proper steps on our part toward the accomplishments of our desires. It rather provokes God to walk the

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more contrary to us, and discomposes our own minds, so as to render them less apt for any prudent endeavours. It increases every uneasiness, instead of lessening it. It adds the weight of guilt to any burden. It obstructs our enjoyment of the mercies we have, and our thankfulness for them; and is often the parent of many great sins, which otherwise would be very remote from mens thoughts. And it is a great disparagement to our holy profession in the view of the world.

2. Christianity furnishes us with the brightest patterns of contentment, to enforce the precepts of it, and prevent our despair of attaining it.

Such a declaration as that in the text, is one of the most persuasive recommendations of the practice. The apostle had learned this, yet he was now in low and strait circumstances: he had learned to be content in any state, and he could say this after he had passed through a great variety of difficulties, had been "in wearinesss and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness," 1 Cor. xi. 27. We are to consider this apostle of the Gentiles as set forth herein, as well as in his obtaining mercy at first, "for a pattern of them which should after believe."

But especially the Lord Jesus is the great pattern of all his followers in this excellent grace. The Lord of Glory stooped to the lowest abasement: "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor;" not only was found in fashion as a man, but appeared in the world

world from his cradle to his grave in a ſtate of meanneſs. In his younger years he paſſed for a carpenter's ſon; and when he came abroad into his public miniſtry, "had not a place" of his own "where to lay his head." Yet through the whole of his courſe not one expreſſion of diſcontent was heard, but his behaviour was perfectly ſuitable to one that conſidered himſelf as come into the world to perform the work aſſigned him; and that was ready to leave it, as ſoon as that was finiſhed. We ſhould all look upon ourſelves in ſuch a view, and look to the example of Jeſus to excite us to be like-minded.

3. Chriſtianity directs us to the moſt effectual teacher, to make theſe conſiderations and helps ſucceſsful for our actual learning the leſſon of contentment: to impreſs the motives of the Goſpel upon our hearts and conſciences; and while we are beholding the amiableneſs of Chriſt's pattern, to "change us into the ſame image." And this is the good Spirit of God. Who teaches like him? Under his influences Paul became ſuch a proficient: and he is equally ready to perform his kind offices for us, if we deſire his aids, and are heartily willing to learn of him.

INFERENCES.

1. The preſent ſtate ſhould be conſidered by us as a ſtate of learning. There are many important leſſons which we are all concerned to learn in Chriſt's ſchool; this of contentment among the reſt: and there will be conſtant

ſtant room, while we are in the body, for learning every one of them better. The apoſtle indeed in the text ſays, that he *had* already *learned* to be content: but when he had declared in this very epiſtle, that he had not already attained, that is, perfectly; we cannot underſtand him, that he was become ſuch a proficient in contentment, as to have no room left for farther improvement; but only that he had attained this ſkill in a competent meaſure. They are truly commendable, who have made a proficiency above others, or above what they were themſelves formerly in any chriſtian excellence; but they ſhould ſtill be aſpiring to the higheſt form.

2. More depends upon our own ſpirits than upon our outward condition, in order to contentment. Paul could ſay he had learned to be content in whatſoever ſtate he was. This was not, becauſe he could chuſe his condition, but becauſe his ſpirit was ſo regulated by the grace of God, that he could be reconciled to any condition. Moſt people judge otherwiſe: they imagine they could be content and at reſt, if they could obtain ſuch a comfort which their hearts are now ſet upon; if they could arrive at an eſtate of ſuch a ſize as would ſupply their preſent wiſhes. Vain thought! if they are gratified in their preſent deſire, a worldly mind unmortified will out-grow their acquiſitions; new wants and new contrivances will ſtart up, and they will be as far from ſatisfaction as at their ſetting out. A low condition, conſidered in itſelf, may ſeem to give the ſtrongeſt temptations to diſcontent; but

if we conſult experience, we ſhall find the rich and the powerful as frequently ſtrangers to an eaſy mind, as thoſe in a mean ſtate of life. The reaſon is, their irregular inclinations and unſatiable deſires are enlarged with their ſubſtance; and therefore all they have, paſſes for nothing, becauſe their own diſtempered appetites will not let them reſt.

We have a lively inſtance of this in Haman: if his deſires could have had any bounds, one would think he had all in poſſeſſion that heart could wiſh for. See how he reckons it up himſelf to his friends; Eſth. v. 11, 12. "He told them of the glory of his riches." He had amaſſed together vaſt treaſures, and was enabled by that means to live in great ſplendor. "And the multitude of his children:" Many heap up riches, but have neither child nor brother to inherit them: but Haman had a multitude of his own deſcendants, no leſs than ten ſons, whatever other children he had; ſo that he might have hopes that his houſe ſhould continue forever, and his dwelling place to all generations. "And all the things wherein the king had promoted him." The ſeveral high offices, and ſtations of truſt and honour, which he had conferred upon him. "And how he had advanced him above the princes and ſervants of the king:" He was prime miniſter, took place of the greateſt princes, who were natives of the country, and of the higheſt officers of the court, who all paid him the next honours to the ſovereign himſelf. "Yea," ſays he, "Eſther the queen let no man come in with the king unto

unto the banquet which ſhe had prepared but myſelf; and to-morrow am I invited unto her alſo with the king:" He thought himſelf to ſtand as high in the queen's favour as in the king's, and from the diſtinguiſhing marks of regard he had had from both, and from the new invitation ſent him for the next day, he had reaſon to apprehend that he was eſtabliſhed in his high dignity. But in all this agreeable ſituation of his affairs, is the man contented? No, he immediately adds, ver. 13. "Yet all this availeth me nothing, ſo long as I ſee Mordecai the Jew ſitting at the king's gate:" Mordecai had denied him the reſpect and reverence which he expected, and this ſpoiled the enjoyment of all his delights. His haughty mind could not brook one man at court who would not cringe to him, ſo that he could not reliſh the obeiſance paid him by all the reſt; his riches, his children, his power, his dignities, all availed him juſt nothing.

This ſtrange, but very ſtriking inſtance, is a full evidence, that the largeſt collection and the greateſt variety of worldly good will not produce contentment; that a ſmall uneaſineſs, the not having a ſingle appetite or paſſion gratified, will take away the reliſh of what is agreeable in life, if ſuch an appetite or paſſion is allowed to be head-ſtrong: and therefore that no condition can make us happy, unleſs a foundation be laid for it in the due regulation of our own ſpirits.

3. Let us therefore labour to have our minds ſo formed, that they can be content and tolerably eaſy in any ſtate of life. Let

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us endeavour to carry such a temper along with us, that we can comport with any condition, and make the best of it; or else in truth there is no condition which will not furnish occasions for discontent. The apostle goes on thus to explain his attainment, ver. 12. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound, and suffer need." Now what is this universal furniture for contentment through all the changes of life? It must consist of these ingredients: A low opinion of this world, and mortified affections to the things of it; a lively faith in the promised realities of the life to come; comfortable hopes of our own title to the heavenly inheritance; and a hearty resignation to the disposal of our heavenly Father for our circumstances by the way. By means of these we shall enjoy a happy calm through every state, and without these we may be overset in any.

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SERMON VII.

Christian Patience.

HEB. x. 36.

For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

PATIENCE is very near a-kin to the grace of contentment, which I have been last upon; and yet there is a difference between them. Contentment properly respects our worldly condition, only as it is supposed capable of rising higher, and as our possession of the good things of life is not compleat. Patience respects the evils of life, which we are actually feeling; or some future good, which we have ground to expect, but that is as yet delayed. And the apostle in the text, compared with the context, represents Christians as needing patience in both these respects.

He reminds these converted Hebrews to whom he wrote, how they had already been called to suffer for Christ, and how well they had acquitted themselves in the trial; ver. 32, 33, 34. "Call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated, ye endured (the word signifies, ye endured with patience) a great fight of afflictions: partly while ye were made a gazing-stock by reproaches

reproaches and afflictions, and partly while ye became companions of them that were ſo uſed. For ye had compaſſion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the ſpoiling of your goods, knowing in yourſelves that ye have in heaven a better and an induring ſubſtance." But their warfare was not yet accompliſhed; and therefore he exhorts them to maintain the ſame temper, animated by the ſame hope; ver. 35. "Caſt not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward:" "Quit not the patience, the courage "and freedom ye have uſed in maintaining "your profeſſion; for the rewards you ex- "pect, will make full amends for all the tri- "als which may be yet behind, as well as for "thoſe already undergone." And therefore ſtop not ſhort of the prize: "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promiſe." There is a promiſe to be received by Chriſtians, which is ſufficient to compenſate the utmoſt ſufferings and ſervices they can paſs through here. But this ſhall not be received, till after they have done the will of God: till they have gone through their courſe of obedience to his preceptive will, and of ſubmiſſion to his providential will, for as long time as he ſees meet to continue them by the way. And therefore every Chriſtian has need of patience in order to this.

I ſhall diſcourſe of the ſubject in the following method. I. Enquire into the nature of chriſtian patience. II. Shew the need and occaſion which a Chriſtian has for it, from this

this conſideration, that he is not to receive the promiſe till after he hath done the will of God. And, III. Repreſent the way to which chriſtianity directs us for ſupplying this need, or for furniſhing us with the patience required.

I. The nature of chriſtian patience is to be conſidered.

I have already ſuggeſted, that the province wherein patience is to be exerciſed, is, either in bearing preſent inconveniences and evils, or in waiting for ſome future good; and eſpecially in the Chriſtian's caſe, waiting for the future bleſſedneſs of heaven.

Two words are more eſpecially uſed in the New Teſtament to expreſs this temper. One is μακροθυμια, *a length of mind.* This our tranſlators ſometimes render *patience*, as in Heb. vi. 12. Jam. v. 10. and ſometimes *long-ſuffering*, as Rom. ii. 4. 2 Cor. vi. 6. Rom. ix. 22, &c. It is directly oppoſed to *haſtineſs of ſpirit.* The other word, moſt frequently uſed for patience, is that in the text, ὑπομονη, *abiding conſtant under afflictions*; or ſuſtaining the evils which befal us, with perſeverance in our duty, in expectation of the deliverance and recompence promiſed in due time.

Patience is not an inſenſibleneſs of preſent evils, or an indifference for future good. "No affliction for the preſent is joyous, but grievous." Chriſt himſelf was ſenſible of his ſufferings, and expreſſed his ſenſe of them. Nor ſhould we be coldly affected to the bleſſings, for which God has encouraged us to hope: that would be a reflection upon their excellence, or upon our own taſte; and would

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make us negligent in endeavours to obtain them.

But chriſtian patience is a diſpoſition that keeps us calm and compoſed in our frame, and ſteady in the practice of our duty, under the ſenſe of our afflictions, or in the delay of our hopes.

The principal expreſſions of it may be reduced to theſe inſtances.

1. Patience ſecures the poſſeſſion of our ſouls, in every circumſtance that tends to diſcompoſe our minds. Chriſt exhorts his diſciples, when he had foretold the ſufferings and dangers to which they would be expoſed, Luke xxi. 19. "In patience poſſeſs ye your ſouls." "Whatever you meet with, keep up the poſ-"ſeſſion of yourſelves; let reaſon and grace maintain the aſcendant, and ſhew yourſelves men." This exhortation ſuppoſes what in fact we find too often true, that ſmart trials, or the deferring of mens hopes, are apt to make their hearts ſick, to maſter and enſlave the mind; ſo that people are hardly their own men, but their violent affections and tumultuous paſſions run away with them. Patience is to guard the ſoul againſt this; to preſerve it ſedate and ſober, that unreaſonable paſſions and reſentments may not boil up either againſt God or man; that inward peace upon the ſolid grounds of religion, may not be loſt in the ſcuffle of paſſion, or clouded by events which have no connection with it; that we may not be ſo infatuated as to loſe the enjoyment of the bleſſings we have, becauſe of ſome evils we feel; and that we may ſtill be able clear-

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ly to discern our present duty in any turns of providence. This is to possess our souls in any trial of patience; to continue in an even frame, and ward off all impressions which would ruffle our minds, or put us out of the temper becoming us as men and Christians.

2. Patience will prevent hasty and rash conclusions, either from present troubles or from the suspension of desired good. We are prone to make a hasty judgment of things from present appearances: against which patience will fortify. We are too ready to charge God foolishly: to call in question the truth of his promises, if he do not accomplish them in our way and time; or to suspect his mercy and goodness, because of the trials which are made our lot: Like the desponding Psalmist, Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" In opposition to this, patience disposes to rest in God's certain declarations of his favour to the upright, and to suppress any such hasty surmises to the dishonour of God; as the same Psalmist did in ver. 10. "This is my infirmity." Or, we may be apt in dark hours to entertain some hard thoughts of religion, when it exposes to suffering, and the recompences of it are considered as out of sight and future: But patience will fix us in this reckoning, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be

revealed in us;" and that the recompences in prospect are worth waiting and suffering for too. If we are ready to despond of success, when we think of the strength or subtlety of our enemies, the variety of our work, and our own weakness; patience will suppress every misgiving thought, and imbolden us to conclude, that "he who hath delivered, and doth deliver, will yet deliver;" that he will "keep us from falling, and fulfil in us the whole good-pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power," if we sincerely endeavour to finish well.

3. Patience will fortify against any unlawful methods for accomplishing our deliverance or desires. It is natural to all under burdens to cast about how they may help themselves, or to consult proper means to obtain what they wish for. Now it is the work of patience to restrain from any sinful expedient, which may seem to promise relief. "He that believeth, shall not make haste," Isa. xxviii. 16. The patient man resolves rather to bear any trouble, than go out of God's way to ease himself: He will reckon it the same thing to have no way at all, as to have no lawful way of deliverance from his affliction. When the Philistines were coming against Saul with a formidable army, and his own people were much discouraged and afraid, he would not wait for deliverance in God's time and way, but he went himself and "offered a burnt offering," 1 Sam. xiii. 9. This was his impatience; and though he promised himself much from it, yet it cost him dear. If he had patiently staid a little

little longer, "God would have established his kingdom upon Israel forever:" But for this hasty step God deprived both him and his family, ver. 13, 14. Patience will not suffer a man to apply to any doubtful course, much less to venture upon any known sin, to precipitate his release or satisfaction.

4. Patience disposes a man to go on in the way of his duty, whatever discouragement may arise from the pressure of his troubles or the deferring of his hopes. This is the most essential part of patience, to persevere in our proper work and our Christian course, whatever weights and burdens attend us, whatever it may cost us, and though the success and benefit of our endeavours do not immediately ensue. The impatient in such a case are apt to be "faint and weary in their minds," to become remiss in their work, and tired out of their waiting frame by sharp and continued trials; if not wholly to give up in despondency. But "the righteous shall hold on his way," Job xvii. 9. This is what the apostle exhorts us to, Heb. xii. 1. to "run with patience the race that is set before us," whatever difficulties it is attended with, and for as long time as our master who hath appointed it, sees meet to continue us in it.

These things may be sufficient to represent the general nature of patience. We shall have occasion to be more particular in the consideration of the second general head proposed, namely.

II. To shew the need and occasion which a Christian has for the exercise of patience. The

The apostle affirms of those to whom he wrote, that they had need of patience: And whatever might be singular in their case there is enough in the common case of all Christians, or for ought they know may be so, to make the same declaration to hold true of them all.

A Christian has need of patience, as well as of other graces of the Spirit, in his way to heaven. This is one branch of the character of every heir of glory, as much as faith, or love, or any other part of the new nature. It is a part of the image of God in his saints. He is stiled "the God of patience," Rom. xv. 5. He is long-suffering, and exercises much forbearance. Though his perfect blessedness admits not properly of his suffering any prejudice, yet he receives many affronts from sinful creatures, and notwithstanding them suspends the execution of his anger, and therein shews as it were a power over himself; as Moses elegantly expresses it in his prayer, Numb. xiv. 17, 18. "Let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy," &c. as if he had said; Yet give another instance, how thou canst restrain thy just anger, by sparing again this provoking people. Now there must be some resemblance of our heavenly Father in all his children, in this as well as other representations of him. They must properly exercise a power over themselves to restrain their passions and keep possession of their souls, under the various providences of God. Hence patience is reckoned.

reckoned up as a branch of the godlike nature in us, 2 Pet. i. 6. and long-ſuffering is one of the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22. and what all the elect of God are preſſed to put on, Col. iii. 12.

Chriſtians have need of patience, in common with the reſt of their fellow-creatures. All have ſome exerciſes of patience in this life, and Chriſtians ſhare in the common lot. They are no more exempted than others from the vanity and uncertainty of the preſent ſtate. Pains and diſeaſes, loſs of friends, ingratitude, diſappointments in their affairs, and all the various troubles to which man is born, fall to the lot of good and bad promiſcuouſly. In theſe things "there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked," Eccl. ix. 2. And they muſt, as well as others, frequently continue expectants for a long time of many outward comforts and benefits they deſire. And therefore they have need of patience, as well as others; and God would have them to be examples to the reſt of the world, in the exerciſe of patience under the ſame circumſtances with them.

Beſides this, Chriſtians, as ſuch, have more need of patience than others; and the greater advances they make in the chriſtian life, ſtill ſo much more occaſion they have for it. They often meet with peculiar exerciſes upon the ſcore of their goodneſs: Sufferings of one kind or other, for the ſake of Chriſt and a good conſcience. Such is the temper of the world, that it ſeldom fails to hold true in ſome degree, that "all that will live godly in

Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12. The church is seldom long without open persecution; and when it enjoys what may comparatively be called rest, yet the number of those who are really religious is so disproportionate to the bad, that they generally meet with some ungrateful distinction from those among whom they live; they can hardly escape reproach, if they are treated no worse. Now all such things are trials of patience. And their disposition toward the promised blessedness, makes the deferring of that a trial peculiar to them. Earthly minds are strangers to any exercise of patience in this case; if they might, they would live here always: But a Christian has fixed his portion in God, and he expects not his full happiness in him till he arrives at heaven, and therefore he prefers that world to this. And the higher advances he has made in knowledge and faith, and meetness and assurance, so much the more will the deferring of his blessedness be a trial of his patience.

Those Christians who have exercised much patience already, yet still have need of it to the end of their lives. It is the scope of the text, as I observed at the beginning, to admonish those who were partakers of this grace, and had given instances of it, that still they had need of it: They had yet need of more patience, and room to acquit themselves better in farther trials.

But that which I would a little more particularly insist upon, is the consideration which the apostle intimates, upon account of which

which they had need of patience; "That, after they had done the will of God, they might receive the promiſe." This gives us a lively repreſentation how neceſſary this grace is, in ſeveral views we may take of it.

1. A Chriſtian has need of patience, to perſiſt in doing the will of God, even in his ordinary courſe. The certain and known duty of a Chriſtian in his way to heaven, independent of thoſe particular circumſtances which are made the lot of ſome, calls for a good meaſure of patience to do it well; for there is ſome difficulty and exerciſe in a chriſtian courſe in the beſt ſtate of things that this world will admit. Hence a "patient continuance in well-doing" is a character requiſite to every Chriſtian, Rom. ii. 7.

Many of the conſtant duties of the chriſtian life are unavoidably a wearineſs to the fleſh. Prayer, and reading, and hearing, cannot be performed without pains: And patience is needful for that reaſon.

Indwelling ſin is frequently making oppoſition; ſo that "when we would do good, evil is preſent with us," Rom. vii. 21. This often occaſions an uneaſy ſtruggle.

We muſt act contrary to the practice of the generality in many inſtances of duty. When the world is at the beſt, this is the caſe. If we would approve ourſelves to God and a good conſcience, we muſt in ſome things be content to ſwim againſt the ſtream, to be ſingular, and "not conformed to the world," Rom. xii. 2. but rather by a contrary practice, with "Noah to condemn the world," Heb. xi. 7. This calls for patience.

In

In many caſes we muſt proceed in the performance of duty, when we cannot diſcern the ſucceſs of paſt endeavours. We muſt ſtill go on ſtriving after the mortification of ſin, though it may appear to us as ſtrong as ever: And perſiſt in the uſe of means for the good of others under our care and influence, though they have hitherto been unſucceſsful. This is a very conſiderable trial of chriſtian patience; the chariot-wheels are very apt to drive heavily in ſuch circumſtances.

And in the advances of age, when natural ſtrength and ſpirits abate, many branches of duty are neceſſarily more tedious and wearisome, as almoſt every action of life is, and yet they muſt not be given over.

2. A Chriſtian hath need of patience, to perſiſt in bearing the will of God, and in doing his duty under it, when his courſe is peculiarly embittered. For inſtance,

To bear the ſhock of ſudden and unexpected trials, which are apt to over-ſet a man at once, and to produce haſty thoughts, and unadviſed words, both of God and man: "I ſaid in my haſte, I am cut off from before thine eyes," Pſal. xxxi. 22. "I ſaid in my haſte all men are lyars," Pſal. cxvi. 11. To ſuppreſs a tumult, and keep the mind in frame upon ſuch an occaſion, is a very great attainment. The patience of Job was remarkable upon this account.

To bear a ſucceſſion of exerciſes one after another, is ſtill more. To have God's waves and billows to paſs over us, and yet keep our heads above water; neither thinking him unkind,

kind, or unjuſt, or unfaithful, nor loſing the uſe of reaſon and grace; is a noble firmneſs of mind. How illuſtrious was the compoſure of Job, when ſo many meſſengers of ill-tidings came thick one upon another? While he humbled himſelf under the mighty hand of God, yet he "fell down and worſhipped, ſaying, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked ſhall I return thither: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job ſinned not, nor charged God fooliſhly." Job. i. 20—22.

To bear the long continuance of exerciſes. Many who have behaved well upon the firſt attack, yet have been tired out by the length and tediouſneſs of afflictions: they have loſt the poſſeſſion of themſelves at laſt, after they had ſuppreſſed paſſion and diſcontent, and hard thoughts for a conſiderable time; and have fallen into ſome indirect courſe for relief, to which they could not find in their hearts to liſten at firſt. Though tribulation is ſometimes ſo ſanctified, that it worketh patience, Rom. v. 3. yet this is far from being its conſtant effect. But how glorious the example, when a man perſeveres in patience through a long courſe of pain, or poverty, or reproach? There was this circumſtance to magnify the patience of Job; though at the ſame time he is an inſtance how ſtrong a temptation the length of exerciſes is: ſince even patient Job, who began ſo gloriouſly, was occaſionally tranſported into ſome ſallies of impatience in the courſe of his trial.

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To bear the hand of God, when he touches us in a most tender point: Not only in small trials, but in great and heavy afflictions. If life, suppose be threatened. The malice of Satan would not be satisfied, when he saw Job's steadiness under his many calamities, without urging God to put him to this last trial; well knowing, that "skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life," Job ii. 4. How hard to have the trial of our faith found unto praise in such a case? Or still to exercise patience, when God deprives us of things not only more remote from our hearts, but when he calls for our Isaac's? when he takes away our idols? Here men are apt to say, I could have borne any thing but this.

To bear God's rod, when we cannot account for his reasons and ends in it. When "clouds and darkness are round about him," yet to believe that "judgment is the habitation of his throne;" this is a hard but a glorious display of patience. Job could say this, Job xxiii. 8—11. "Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined."

To bear sharp afflictions, when natural spirits are decayed. *The spirit of a man, when* lively, and well supported by the animal spirits,

its, *will* go a great way to *sustain his infirmity*: but when *the spirit is wounded*, not only by guilt, but by weakness of body, sinking distresses, or the infirmities of age, how much harder, are the amiable expressions of patience?

To bear affliction patiently, when an unlawful way of deliverance seems directly to offer itself and to promise relief. It is hard in such circumstances to chuse suffering rather than sinning; to be content to bear our burden still, rather than be eased of it upon such terms. As in a time of persecution for conscience sake, if we should have life or liberty offered us, on condition we will violate the dictates of our consciences; this is an eminent trial of christian patience.

3. A Christian hath need of patience to persist in waiting to the end to receive the promise. Especially,

If he has lively views of a happy state before him, and comfortable hopes of his own title to it. Here the height of his Christianity increases the trial of his patience. The more relishing the heavenly state is to him, so much the more ardent will be his desires.

If his course be greatly imbittered in the mean while, by bodily infirmities, by troubles in the world, by the removal of many of his pious friends and acquaintance to heaven before him; this heightens the exercise of patience to an assured Christian from the delay of his hopes.

If his service and usefulness are to appearance much over. When Paul was in a strait between

between two, which to chuſe, being with Chriſt, or ſtaying a little longer below; he was content upon the proſpect of future ſerviceableneſs to the church of Chriſt, to remain longer in the body, Phil. i. 23, 24. But when an aged ſervant of Chriſt, who knows whether he is going, but finds that his active work is done, and thinks himſelf laid by as a veſſel of little more uſe; when ſuch a one is yet continued waiting in pain and weakneſs, without being capable of reliſhing the enjoyments, or performing the buſineſs of life; this is a ſingular exerciſe of patience. And eſpecially,

If he hath long thought himſelf going, juſt at harbour, but finds himſelf driven back again to ſea; every ſuch inſtance is a freſh trial to him.

A Chriſtian then has great need of patience. I proceed,

III. To ſhew the way to which chriſtianity directs us for ſupplying this need, or for furniſhing us with the patience required. And it ſuggeſts to us ſuch directions as theſe.

1. Whatever is a trial of our patience, we ſhould conſider it as the will of God concerning us. This is the juſteſt foundation of patience, and the beſt preparation for it. It will over-awe our ſouls, to do, and bear, and wait without fretting or paſſionate ſallies. For what room can there be to repine, when all is adjuſted by one whoſe *counſel ſhall ſtand, and* who *will do all his pleaſure?* and who is a better judge than ourſelves what is fit for us. Shall not this induce us to ſay with a placid ſubmiſſion,

submission, Lord, "not as I will, but as thou wilt? Let him do what seemeth him good." If our work in some parts of it is ungrateful to flesh and blood, self-denying and singular; yet should not we think, "Who art thou, O man, who replieſt against God?" Should we be lawless, or receive law from him? In the whole compass of duty we are doing the will of God, and that is enough. Are we labouring without visible success? yet we should at God's command let down the net again: He may have purposes to serve by our work, though our direct end in it should never be accomplished; or he may accomplish our desire by future endeavours, though those already past have been ineffectual. Are we called to sufferings? we ought to remember, that they came not by chance, but *according to the will of God;* and therefore we may therein *commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator*, 1 Pet. iv, 19. We are *waiting till our change come;* but let us think, that it is *all the days of our appointed time*, Job xiv. 14. Before we *fall asleep*, we must be content to *serve our generation according to the will of God*, Acts xiii. 36. to accomplish the measure of service and suffering which it is his pleasure to assign us, before we are dismissed. And though we should in a great measure be past active service, yet if it be his will that we should still remain examples of waiting, is not that a sufficient reason to wait patiently, till he hath "fulfilled all the good pleasure of his goodness in us and by us?"

2. We should strengthen our faith in the discoveries of the Gospel, and live in the daily exercise of it. The principles of faith contain the fittest motives to dispose the mind to a fixed patience and an absolute resignation to the divine will in all circumstances; and under the powerful influence of a lively faith in them, patience will be an easy and practicable thing. Therefore those who actually *inherit the promises*, are represented as arriving at them *through faith and patience;* through faith as the principle, and patience as the fruit; Heb. vi. 12.

By this means we shall be satisfied that the exercises of our patience are not inconsistent with the goodness and favour of God. In circumstances that bear hard upon us, we may be ready to conclude, that if these are his will concerning us, they are certain marks that we are not in a state of acceptance: whereas faith will teach us, that "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth:" that "if we endure chastening, God dealeth with us as with sons," Heb. xii. 7, 8.

Faith will assure us of divine care to moderate our exercises in proportion to our strength, to support us under them, and deliver us out of them in due time. Christ assured his first disciples of a special presence of God with them and care of them, when he foretold the difficulties they were to pass through, in Luke xxi. that "he would give them a mouth and wisdom, which their adversaries should not be able to resist," ver. 15.

and

and that "not a hair of their heads should perish," ver. 18. And thereupon exhorts them in "patience to possess their souls," ver. 19. If any should say that this was an encouragement peculiar to them, the Gospel has left one sufficient to support every true believer, 1 Cor. x. 13. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Faith will refresh us with the prospect of a blessed issue of all: That "blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him," Jam. v. 12.

3. We should carefully cultivate the principle of love to God. That is the character of those who are declared blessed in the place just mentioned, and intitled to the crown of life after their trials. If then we love God in the darkest hours, we may take the comfort of that promise, and suppress all impatience in view of the approaching reward. And besides this, a strong affection to God will naturally put a good construction upon all his pleasure. We shall not think much of any service to which he calls us, when it is not only *the work of faith*, but *the labour of love*, 1 Thess. i. 3. Then no sufferings for him will be accounted hard, but we shall rather "rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." No waiting will be thought unreasonable, while we are satisfied

fied he loves us, and our love to him induces us to interpret all delays as consistent with that.

4. Let us often represent to our minds the present advantages of patience. It is its own reward, as impatience is its own punishment. What more advantageous view can be given of patience, than that of our Saviour, that by it we shall possess our souls? We shall keep reason and grace in the throne, and be capable of enjoying ourselves in all events. Whereas impatience lays aside the man, and either sets up the brute or the devil in us; leads us to act a foolish or an outrageous part. Patience lightens our burden; impatience doubles it, piercing the heart through with many sorrows. Patience is the likely way to disarm an enemy; it pleases and honours God, and keeps us in a posture to receive a deliverance from our troubles, or the accomplishment of our hopes, with a double relish.

5. We should often contemplate the great examples of patience. "Be followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises," Heb. vi. 12. "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us —— run with patience the race that is set before us," chap. xii. 1. The observation of the great patterns of patience will convince us that it is a practicable thing, and that the best of men have often had the most trying exercises: And it will be of use both to direct and excite to the practice.

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Let us eſpecially look unto Jeſus for this purpoſe. Think what trials of patience he met with: The moſt difficult work to be performed, wherein he often met with the contradiction of ſinners; the ſevereſt ſufferings to be undergone; and a time to wait till his work was finiſhed; for it is often obſerved in his hiſtory, that his time was not yet come. Let us obſerve alſo, how to behave in all theſe circumſtances of trial. With the utmoſt regard to the will of God. This he came into the world to do, though that was the moſt amazing inſtance of humiliation, Heb. x. 7. When his laſt ſufferings were at hand, while he expreſſed the deſire of human nature, "Father, ſave me from this hour," he breathed alſo the calmeſt ſubmiſſion to his will; "Father, glorify thy name," John xii. 27, 28. And in another Evangeliſt, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," Matt. xxvi. 39. His patience was as illuſtrious to his injurious enemies, praying to his Father on the croſs to "forgive them," Luke xiii. 34. and "when he was reviled by them, he reviled not again." And though he could have no reliſh for this world, any farther than to do good in it, yet he was content to ſtay God's time for finiſhing his work, though he *was ſtraitened* with deſire, *till it was accompliſhed*, Luke xii. 50. Here was a perfect pattern for us to follow in the way to perfection.

But the examples of others of the excellent of the earth in this grace are not without their uſe. As the apoſtle refers us, Heb. xii. 1. to

the most eminent saints in general of the Old Testament, for an example of patience, as well as faith; so we are directed in particular to "take the prophets, who spake in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience," Jam. v. 10. Many of them under the darker light of the Old Testament, as they met with ill treatment, and that for their fidelity to God, so were illustrious patterns of patience. The apostles were the like under the New Testament; they were "our brethren and companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," Rev. i. 9. You may see their case in that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 9. They were "set forth, as it were appointed unto death; made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." And ver. 11. they "hungered, and thirsted, and were naked and buffeted, and had no certain dwelling-place." Such examples shew us, that God's highest favourites had very ill usage from the world, and great afflictions in it: And their eminent behaviour is a noble pattern for imitation.

And it will be our wisdom particularly to turn our eye to those patterns, which are most directly suited to our circumstances from time to time. Job will furnish us with an example of patience in all the peculiarities that can attend afflictions of a common kind; and the noble army of martyrs and confessors will be of like use, if we are called to suffer persecution.

6. We should be earnest in prayer to God for this grace, Jam. i. 4, 5. "Let patience have

have her perfect work.—If any of you lack wisdom," this wisdom of patience, "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given unto him." Patience is justly called here *wisdom* by way of eminence, because it is one of the hardest, and yet one of the most excellent lessons of christianity. Now the apostle puts the very case in the text. *If any man lack wisdom*; and directs him to *ask* that very thing *of God*. He adds encouragements to such a prayer: *He giveth to all men liberally*, to all who uprightly ask it. And if he gives liberally, we shall have a plentiful stock to spend upon. *And upbraideth not*; either with coming often to ask it, as the occasions for exercising it are frequent; or even with past impatience, if men come with penitent hearts to beg a better frame. And as if this was not enough, he adds, *And it shall be given him*; to animate the assured hope of all sincere supplicants. For a close,

1. Let those who are destitute of the principle, be sensible of their need, and solicitous that they may obtain it. We should consider patience as a frame, for which every day's occurrences give us some occasion. And when there is such occasion, patience is a very necessary duty; as necessary as it is to please God, to honour religion, to keep a good conscience, to run our christian race well. We can no more inherit the promise without patience in a prevailing degree, than without an unfeigned faith.

2. Let us be solicitous to have this neces-

sary

ſary principle daily ſtrengthened, to exerciſe it upon every proper occaſion, and that it may have its perfect work. The full work of patience is the higheſt perfection of a chriſtian on earth.

Be ſolicitous to exert its moſt excellent acts. Not only that we may be preſerved by it from ſinking, and murmuring and notorious miſbehaviour; but that there may be the moſt complacential acquieſcence in the will of God; that we may be in a frame for praiſe in the darkeſt day. Bleſſed be the name of the Lord.

Study to have the actings of patience eaſy and ready to you, as there is occaſion. To be able to ſay with Paul, Acts xxi. 13. "I am ready not to be bound only, but alſo to die for the name of the Lord Jeſus."

Be careful that the exerciſes of it be laſting: That it be a fixed habit, and not only by ſtarts: Like Moſes, who made the exerciſe of patience ſo conſtant a practice, that we find but one inſtance to the contrary through his whole ſtory.

And let there be a general exerciſe of this holy frame upon every occaſion, in all the proper inſtances of it, however it may be tried. In great, as well as in leſs trials; and in ſmall exerciſes as well as in great; for ſometimes impatience breaks out in men upon trivial occaſions, after they had been ſignal for patience in great and ſhocking calamities: And in unuſual trials, as well as in thoſe to which we have been accuſtomed. Let our Maſter find us in ſuch a frame at his coming, whenever it ſhall be.

SER-

SERMON VIII.

Loving our neighbour as ourselves.

MATT. xxii. 39.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

THESE words are part of an answer given by our Lord to a question which was proposed to him by one of the Pharisees with a captious intention; namely, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" ver. 35, 36. Christ, in return, cites two passages of the Old Testament, which contain the sum of both tables of the moral law, or of our duty to God and man: Plainly intimating thereby the mans enquiry to be a matter of vain curiosity; and that these great branches of our duty rather require our observation, than that we should set them in competition. *The love of God*, and the proper expressions of that, are indeed *the first and great commandment*, ver. 37, 38. It is *first* in order of nature, and in the preeminence of the object to which it relates, and it is the foundation of our duty to our neighbour.

But lest the Pharisee should run away with this just commendation of the *first* table, and either represent Christ as making light of the *second*,

ſecond, or excuſe himſelf by Chriſt's authority in neglecting the *ſecond*, while he paid a ſeeming regard to the *firſt*; our bleſſed Lord not only adds the *ſecond*, but an emphatical recommendation of it alſo: "And the *ſecond* is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf." Like the firſt: not only as the obſervance of that, as well as of the former, may be ſummed up in *love*; but as it is preſcribed by the ſame authority, and made by the great Lawgiver as indiſpenſably neceſſary as the other.

I therefore chuſe this precept, as our Lord does, to be a ſummary of the temper due from us to other people; and ſo to ſtand at the head of the particular graces and virtues which have them for their direct object.

In the conſideration of it, it will be proper to enquire, I. Whom we are to underſtand by *our neighbour*. II. What is intended by the *love* of our neighbour. III. What is implied in the meaſure preſcribed for this love; to love him *as ourſelves*. And IV. As this gracious command ſtands in the chriſtian inſtitution, I would conſider the ſpecial obligations from chriſtianity to ſuch a temper.

I. It is a needful enquiry, whom we are to underſtand by *our neighbour*.

In the paſſage from which our Lord ſeems to quote the precept, this phraſe appears to mean only a man of the Jewiſh religion, Lev. xix. 18. "Thou ſhalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge againſt the children of thy people; but thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf." The *children of thy people* in the former ſentence,

tence, and *thy neighbour* in the latter, ſeem terms of the ſame import and extent, denoting thoſe of the Jewiſh nation and religion. It is indeed commanded in the ſame chapter, ver. 34. "The ſtranger that dwelleth with you ſhall be as one born among you; and thou ſhalt love him as thyſelf." But the Jews underſtood this only of ſuch, who, though they were not born of the ſeed of Abraham, yet became proſelites of righteouſneſs; that is, voluntarily ſubmitted to their law, and ſo became full members of their church and community.

Many proofs might be given of the narrowneſs of the Jewiſh charity. It plainly appears in the prejudice which remained in Peter's mind even after Chriſt's aſcenſion, againſt any converſe with a devout Gentile, as Cornelius was, till God by immediate revelation cured him of his bigotry. He ſpoke the common ſenſe of his nation, when he tells Cornelius and his friends, Acts x. 28. "Ye know that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew, to keep company, or come unto one of another nation: but God hath ſhewed me, that I ſhould not call any man common or unclean." And we find how hardly digeſted this ſtep of Peter's was, at firſt, even by the converted Jews; they "contended with him, becauſe he went in to men uncircumciſed, and did eat with them," chap. xi. 2, 3. They went ſo far, as to deny the common offices of humanity, or at leaſt not to think themſelves obliged to ſhew them to any but a brother Jew; for which a heathen poet juſtly laſhes them, that they would not ſhew

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the way, or discover a spring to quench one's thirst, to any but those of their religion: Though he misrepresents the matter, when he makes this a precept of the law of Moses; for there is no such precept in it.

Judaicum ediscunt, & servant, & metuunt jus,
Tradidit arcano quodcunque volumine Moses;
Non monstrare vias, eadem nisi sacra colenti;
Quæsitum at fontem solos deducere verpos.

Juvenal. Sat. xiv.

The case was this. God had singled them out from other nations to be his peculiar people, and distinguished them by a more immediate government of his own. Now they understood their laws, even the moral itself, to be only the political laws of their community, and only to be observed toward their brethren of that favourite nation.

But Christ hath extended the community to which our love is due, to all mankind, with whom we have to do.

He plainly puts this extensive sense upon the term, *our neighbour*, in Luke x. There, as well as in the text, he sums up our duty in "loving God," and "loving our neighbour as ourselves," ver 27. The person who was in conference with him, asks him thereupon, "And who is my neighbour?" ver. 29. Christ in return puts a case; whether it was real, or supposed, is of no consequence. That a man, falling into the hands of thieves on the road, was left by them in great distress: A Jewish Priest, and afterwards a Levite passed by, but neglected to give him any relief. These might be

be ſuppoſed to excuſe themſelves by ſaying, that they were not ſure this miſerable man was a Jew, and therefore paſſed him by. At length another paſſenger, who was a Samaritan, came up to the place, and upon the mere ſight of a man in diſtreſs, without ſtaying to aſk who or what he was, very tenderly compaſſionated and relieved him. Now upon this caſe Chriſt appeals to the Lawyer that had aſked him, who is my neighbour, with another queſtion in return, ver. 36. "Which now of thoſe three, thinkeſt thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?" which performed the moſt neighbourly part to him? The Lawyer could not help acknowledging, "He that ſhewed mercy on him. Then ſaid Jeſus unto him, Go and do thou likewiſe," ver. 37. Though it ſhould be a Samaritan that falls in thy way; though he ſhould be a ſtranger; though he ſhould be an enemy. The Jews and Samaritans had the greateſt abhorrence one of another: Both ſhewed it in their treatment of Chriſt. The Samaritans at one time *would not receive him* into one of their cities, *becauſe his face was as though he would go to Jeruſalem*, Luke ix. 53. On the other hand, when ſome of the Jews were in a rage at Chriſt, they knew not a more opprobrious name to throw out againſt him, than to call him a Samaritan, with an addition as black as hell, John viii. 48. "Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and haſt a devil?"

Now the ſcene of the caſe which Chriſt put being in Judea, between Jeruſalem and Jeri-

co, it might well appear moſt probable to the Samaritan, that the diſtreſſed perſon was a Jew, and therefore not one whom he could conſider as a brother in religion, but rather as an enemy; yet being a fellow-creature in miſery, he thought that alone ſufficient to entitle him to offices of humanity. And herein Chriſt propoſes him to imitation.

We ſee then the comprehenſive latitude, in which Chriſt would have us to underſtand *our neighbour*. Not only, according to the uſual ſenſe of the word, our neighbours in ſtated vicinity of abode, or thoſe we call relations; or ſuch to whom we are peculiarly attached by previous acquaintance, or intimacy and friendſhip; or thoſe from whom we have received or may have a proſpect of receiving benefits; nor only good men, or thoſe who are of "the houſehold of faith:" Though theſe and the like diſtinguiſhing circumſtances of ſome from others, may oblige us to a peculiar affection, and to more particular and frequent ways of expreſſing it; yet all men are to be eſteemed our neighbours, within the deſign of the command, who partake of the human nature. And becauſe they do ſo,

II. I am to enquire what is intended by *loving our neighbour*.

It is plain that this is deſigned for a ſummary of the duties of the ſecond table, or of thoſe we owe to the reſt of mankind; as loving God is of thoſe we owe to him. So the apoſtle explains it, Rom. xiii. 8, 9. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this,

this, Thou ſhalt not commit adultery, Thou ſhalt not kill, Thou ſhalt not ſteal, Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs, Thou ſhalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this ſaying, namely, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf." And again, Gal. v. 14. "All the law," i. e. relating to our neighbour, "is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf."

It is ſuch a value for him, upon account of the excellencies of the rational nature which he hath in common with ourſelves, as diſpoſes us not to deny him any of his juſt rights or do him any harm: and on the other hand to have a hearty good-will to him, and to be ready to expreſs it in all the proper offices of kindneſs and beneficence, as we have a juſt call and opportunity for it.

If it be aſked, why all our duty to our neighbour, as well as to God, is ſummed up in *love?* There are two principal reaſons to be aſſigned for it.

1. Becauſe a due temper of mind to our neighbour, as well as to God himſelf, is neceſſary to our acceptance. It is on purpoſe that we may attend to the principle, as well as the external act, in this as in all other parts of our duty. Inward love to our neighbour, is the firſt thing which the ſpiritual law of God requires from us; and ſo ill-will and enmity are the firſt tranſgreſſions of it. Though they ſhould proceed no farther than the heart, though our neighbour ſhould receive no actual prejudice from them; yet they would make

make us transgressors in God's account: If we should "be angry with another without a cause," Matt. v. 22. if we should entertain a secret grudge, or malice, or envy, or unjust contempt in the heart; though it should never break out, though external appearances should be ever so fair: yet these things will make us criminal in the sight of God.

2. Because all the particular branches of our duty to our neighbour, will most naturally and easily flow from love to him. If a real inward love to men could be separated from the proper outward effects, then that would by no means be sufficient. The pretence of love may be separated from the fruits of it, and that without doubt will fail of acceptance. And therefore we have that caution, 1 John iii. 18. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue (only) but in deed and in truth."

But therefore all is comprehended in love; because genuine love will lay the most pleasing and powerful constraint upon us, to perform the several particular duties which are required from us. A man that loves his neighbour, will be pushed on by that affection to do the very same things to him, which God requires of him as an act of obedience; so that nothing, as one elegantly says, will remain to turn his temper into obedience, but to direct his intention, and to perform the effects of love in obedience to God, which he is strongly excited to by his own loving disposition.

Justice, and beneficence or charity, comprehend

prehend all our duties to our neighbour. And sincere love will effectually prompt to both. If we truly love our fellow-creatures, that will easily obviate any temptation to do them injury, in any concern we have with them, and will not suffer us to be wanting in any known point of duty to them. St. Paul gives this as a reason for comprehending all under love, that it necessarily includes in it a disposition to righteousness, Rom. xiii. 10. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." And St. John tells us that it will make us inoffensive, 1 John ii. x. "He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him;" i. e. This will secure him against giving just ground of offence.

And it will equally dispose to the performance of all good offices. It will be a law of kindness: not only make us harmless and blameless, but studious to do good, and to treat all as persons we love. Charity or love hath all those excellent properties assigned to it, which we find in 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7. because it has the most extensive influence to produce them all. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

III. We are to consider what is implied in

the meaſure preſcribed for the love of our neighbour, that we ſhould love him as ourſelves.

1. This plainly ſuppoſes the lawfulneſs of ſome ſelf-love.

The love of ourſelves is not indeed in ſo many words made the matter of a precept, as the love of God and of our neighbour are; becauſe we have it by inſtinct of nature, and neceſſarily, ſo that we cannot diveſt ourſelves of it without putting off humanity at the ſame time. We need not therefore an exhortation to ſelf-love in general becauſe it is not indeed a matter of choice, we cannot help it. All that is proper to be the ſubject of a command, is the regulation of this natural principle; a direction of us to our trueſt intereſt, that we may not purſue a falſe ſcent in our general tendency toward happineſs. And this is the buſineſs of God's commands, in keeping of which there is great reward, our duty being made our intereſt. All God's promiſes, and threatenings, and warnings, are an appeal to this natural principle; they ſuppoſe it to be lawful to ſeek our own welfare, and commendable to take the trueſt meaſures for promoting it.

We not only may, but ought to love and ſeek the welfare of our bodies, as far as that conſiſts with our ſuperior intereſts. "No man," ſays the apoſtle, "ever yet hated his own fleſh, but nouriſheth and cheriſheth it;" Eph. v. 29. no man in his right wits. And for our trueſt ſelf, our ſouls, our Saviour repreſents the folly of neglecting the care of them, Luke ix. 25. "What is a man advantaged,

taged, if he gain the whole world, and loſe himſelf?"

When therefore it is made a term of being Chriſt's diſciple, that a man "muſt deny himſelf," Luke ix. 23. it only ſignifies that he muſt be content to deny his own ſinful inclinations, and irregular paſſions, and ſometimes his preſent eaſe and humour, and ſecular intereſts; but all for the ſake of his greater intereſts, to advantage himſelf in a higher degree. And when it is deſcribed as one of the bad characters of the laſt time, that "men ſhould be lovers of their ownſelves," 2 Tim. iii. 2. it only means that unreaſonable love of ourſelves, which we call ſelfiſhneſs, or ſuch a ſelf-love as excludes the love of God and of our neighbour. But there is a love of ourſelves, which is not only allowed, but is the neceſſary foundation of all religion, and is here made the meaſure of our love to our neighbour.

2. When we are taught to love our neighbour as ourſelves, it may intimate the reaſon upon which we ſhould be well affected to our neighbour. We ſhould not conſider others (as we are apt to do mankind at large, unleſs they are more nearly attached to us than by a participation of the ſame general nature) as ſuch in whom we have no concern, or who are altogether remote from us; but as in a moral ſenſe ourſelves: as we ſay of a friend or family-relation, he is to us as ourſelves; or as a it is ſaid of Jonathan with reſpect to David, he "loved him as his own ſoul," 1 Sam. xviii. 1. In truth every man ſhould in-

in a ſenſe be ſo eſteemed by us all. We ſtand in nearer relations and under more ſpecial obligations to ſome than to others; but we are ſo nearly related and allied to all, that it claims our love. This will be more inlarged upon preſently.

3. It may be conſidered as a direction to the proper ways of expreſſing our love to our neighbour. If it ſhould be aſked, how we are to expreſs our love to our neighbour; there cannot be a more inſtructive anſwer in ſo few words than this; Love him as yourſelves. How does your love to yourſelf work? You know the motions of your own heart, how the pulſe of ſelf-love beats, and what you are ready to do upon that impulſe for your own welfare. Now if you had no other inſtruſter or monitor to teach your duty to your neighbour, you might have ſufficient direction by attending to the acts and fruits of your love to yourſelves. We know by feeling what it is to love ourſelves, and what that carries us to do: the precept before us preſcribes this very thing for the rule of our temper and conduct to our neighbour; it leaves us as it were to preſcribe to ourſelves, and to take the meaſure from ourſelves. As if it had been ſaid, *Judge ye of your own ſelves*, and by yourſelves, *what is right* in this matter.

Are we not tenacious of our own rights, and very ſenſible of any injury or injuſtice done us by others? If we love them as we love ourſelves, it will lead us to juſtice and righteouſneſs; to be tender of their rights

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as we are of our own, and to be careful that we do them no harm any more than ourſelves.

We are quick at diſcerning any thing valuable in ourſelves, and apt enough to ſupport our own character. If our love to others be like that which we bear to ourſelves, it will teach us to obſerve any thing that is valuable in them, and to pay them the regard and reſpect due to them, according to what is amiable and commendable in them. And ſuch an impartial view of the excellencies of others as well as of our own, would be a ſtrong argument to humility.

We heartily deſire our own welfare in every inſtance, according to the beſt apprehenſions we can form of it; nor do we content ourſelves with mere good wiſhes, but take pains to obtain the ſeveral good things upon which our hearts are ſet. And if we are in earneſt religious, this is our temper and conduct for ourſelves, with reference to ſpiritual and eternal bleſſings, as well as for other comforts deſirable in their places. The ſame diſpoſition extended to our neighbours would form us to univerſal benevolence, and to be active and induſtrious in doing good to the ſouls and bodies of men.

We apply to other people, who we think may be helpful to us in our difficulties, and in promoting our intereſts. Love to them will make us ready to help them according to our capacity. This would lead to a merciful diſpoſition.

We are not prone to be ſoon angry with ourſelves

ourſelves, or to put the worſt conſtructions upon our own actions, or to publiſh our own faults: but we are apt to complain of other peoples indecent paſſions to us, of their cenſoriouſneſs, and of their divulging reports unneceſſarily to our diſadvantage. We ſhould take the hint from that, to exerciſe meekneſs and charity to our neighbours, and to ſpeak evil of no man without juſt reaſon.

We take pleaſure in our own welfare in any inſtance, and are tenderly affected with our own burdens and ſorrows. Love to our neighbour will diſpoſe us to bear a ſenſible part in his joys and afflictions; to "rejoice with with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

And we might carry on the ſame compariſon through all the graces and virtues incumbent on us towards other people.

4. This beſpeaks the high degree of love due from us to our neighbour. We are to love him as ourſelves.

I cannot indeed apprehend, that a ſtrict equality is meant. Our charity, or love, is certainly to begin at home. That is imported in its being made the meaſure of our love to others. And every man is to conſider himſelf as charged in the firſt place with himſelf. We are neither to take the ſame pains for the ſouls nor for the bodies of others, as for our own.

We are not to extend an equal love to all others alike, but in proportion to what is lovely and amiable in them. Hence good men juſtly claim a more diſtinguiſhing ſhare

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in our affections than others: "The excellent of the earth, in whom is all my delight," Pſal. xvi. 2.

Nor have all at large an equal right to the expreſſions of our love. Thoſe under our immediate care and charge, in our families or otherwiſe, require our more ſpecial endeavours for the good of their ſouls; and our own families are firſt to be provided for in their temporal intereſt. Men are not to be beneficent to others, to the real detriment of their own families. And I believe many are unjuſtly cenſured for covetouſneſs, becauſe they do not as much for others as they expect, when really the circumſtances of themſelves and their families, which are unknown to the world, will not admit of it. Every man muſt judge for himſelf, as in the ſight of God, what is fit for him to do; and other people ſhould be very ſlow in cenſuring, where they have not ſure grounds to go upon.

But yet certainly though this precept preſcribes not an entire equality, yet it beſpeaks a high degree of affection due to our neighbour.

That we ſhould love him with equal ſincerity as we do ourſelves: be as entirely free from all enmity and malice, and ill-will to him, as to ourſelves; and no more allow ourſelves to injure him.

We ſhould as readily obſerve and own any thing truly commendable in another, as in ourſelves; and as willingly make allowances for his imperfections as our own. In the matter

matter of eſtimation we ſhould endeavour to be impartial; not flattering ourſelves, or under-rating the excellencies of others: Rom. xii. 10. "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."

There ought to be an alacrity and delight in doing any good offices we are capable of to others, as well as when we are ſerving ourſelves, which is "loving them fervently," 1 Pet. i. 22.

Yea, there are caſes wherein we are to prefer their intereſt to our own; or their ſpiritual and eternal welfare to our own preſent advantage or ſafety. St. John tells us, 1 John iii. 16. that in ſome caſes "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Either be content to hazard them in martyrdom, when our flight and quitting the field of battle may be foreſeen likely to expoſe ſome we are nearly concerned with to fall from their ſtedfaſtneſs. St. Paul could ſay with reference to his beloved Philippians, Phil. ii. 17. "If I be offered upon the ſacrifice and ſervice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." Or when we may be called to venture our lives for the defence of the innocent, when they are injurioufly aſſaulted: or to aſſiſt our neighbours in an imminent danger: Or eſpecially to hazard our own lives to ſecure and ſave much more valuable lives than our own. So Priſcilla and Aquilla had *for Paul's life laid down their own necks;* i. e. expoſed themſelves to ſkreen Paul in ſome extreme danger he had been in for which they had the

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thanks of all the churches of the Gentiles, Rom. xvi. 4.

IV. I proceed to shew the special obligations which christianity lays upon us to the love of our neighbour. To this end we may observe, that,

1. Christianity hath eminently provided to carry our love to this large extent, to consider every man as our neighbour. While it has laid a foundation for a more distinguishing affection to our brethren in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, it leads us to consider all men as near to us, and gives us many uniting views of them. For instance,

It represents the natural relation and alliance which there is between all men as such. The Gospel calls us back to contemplate the common original of our natures, that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth," Acts xvii. 26. So that we are to consider ourselves and others as all descended from one common father; not only from Adam, the *father of our flesh*; but as he was *the son of God*, we are all in common the offspring of our Father in heaven, ver. 29. When we look upon the meanest or even the worst of men, we should make the reflection which Job did in reference to his servants, and for the sake of which he durst not despise them; Job xxxi. 13—15. "Did not he that made me in the womb, make them? and did not one fashion us in the womb?" And this common Father is yet more eminently so, as he is *the Father*

of ſpirits, as he has breathed into them and us, living, reaſonable and immortal ſouls; which gives a dignity and rank to men in the order of being above the viſible creation. *There is a ſpirit in man*, in every man; *and the inſpiration of the Almighty giveth them underſtanding*, Job xxxii. 8. Now this ſimilitude of nature, eſpecially of reaſonable powers, is a juſt ground of univerſal love.

The Goſpel alſo acquaints us with the common ſtate of apoſtacy and miſery in which all mankind is involved: "All the world is become guilty before God." Rom. iii. 19. This indeed ſullies the amiableneſs of the whole race; but at the ſame time repreſents us one to another, as in like circumſtances of diſtreſs and danger, and therefore ſhould induce to common compaſſion and ſympathy, and mortify that pride upon other accounts, which might tempt us to ſet ourſelves unduly above others.

On the other hand, the good-will of God to men in general is proclaimed in the Goſpel, and the kind aſpect of redemption not upon the Jewiſh incloſure only, but upon all without diſtinction. "Chriſt is the propitiation for our ſins," ſays St. John; "and not for ours only, but alſo for the ſins of the whole world," 1 John ii. 2. By that he has broken down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, the Jewiſh covenant of peculiarity and its appendages. Neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion; for in Chriſt Jeſus "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free,

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there is neither male nor female;" there is no difference between them in their capacity of acceptance with God upon the terms of the Goſpel; "for they are all one in Chriſt Jeſus," Gal. iii. 28. Therefore Peter, declares, that "God had ſhewed him, that he ſhould not call any man common, or unclean," Acts x. 28. Not common, becauſe he was an alien from the commonwealth of Iſrael; not unclean, merely becauſe he ſubmitted not to the law of Moſes. Now this common propoſal of a way of ſalvation to all men, ſhould cement affection and inclination to one another;

Eſpecially when we conſider alſo that we are taught hereby to look upon all men, as ſuch who may poſſibly at leaſt ſhare with us in the heavenly happineſs. Suppoſe them ever ſo bad at preſent, yet by the grace of God this may be their caſe. Which certainly ſhould invigorate our endeavours that it may be ſo, and diſpoſe us to every other friendly office by the way.

Upon ſuch principles as theſe, chriſtianity moſt expreſsly commands univerſal love, and the proper expreſſions of it. That we ſhould "abound in love one towards another, and toward all men." 1 Theſſ. iii. 12. "Be patient toward all men," chap. v. 10. And "ſhew meekneſs to all men," Tit. iii. 2. That we ſhould "do good to all men," Gal. vi. 10. And "make ſupplications and prayers, and interceſſions, and giving of thanks, for all men," 1 Tim. ii. 1.

2. The Goſpel lays the greateſt ſtreſs upon this

this duty. Christ emphatically calls it "his new commandment, by which all men should know his disciples," John xiii. 34, 35. It is represented as the very design of the Gospel-dispensation, 1 Tim. i. 5. "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." St. Peter puts a very special mark of distinction upon it, among his practical exhortations, and that in prospect of the end of all things as at hand; "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves," 1 Pet. iv. 7, 8. The want of it is declared to be a sure evidence of a state of death, 1 John iii. 14, 15. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know, that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." What an honour is put upon this command in the text, when our Lord declares it to be like the first, of loving God? He condescends as it were to place it upon a level with the other, at least to make it as indispensibly necessary: and no wonder, when true love to God will certainly produce this. 1 John iv. 20. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a lyar: For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Our Saviour plainly intimates that God will not accept our solemn sacrifices to himself, while we are under the power of an uncharitable spirit by directing us to go and seek reconciliation with

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our brother, before we offer our gift; Matt. v. 23, 24.

3. A general love is recommended to us by the greateſt and nobleſt examples. Not to inſiſt now upon thoſe of the beſt men.

God himſelf is our pattern herein. How extenſive is his goodneſs to all his creatures, eſpecially to all his intelligent creatures! How illuſtrious and ſenſible the fruits of it! How free and diſintereſted are all the expreſſions of his grace! All he does for mankind, is contrary to their deſerts. Yet he *does not willingly afflict the children of men*; but *his mercies are new every morning, and freſh every moment.* He is daily protecting and providing for the wants of our bodies; and moſt condeſcending and conſtant in his compaſſion for our ſouls. He *found out a ranſom* for us; *ſpared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all* anaſked; and is ever ready to *give good things*, even his good Spirit himſelf, *to them that aſk him.* Should not this inſpire us with ſuch a godlike temper in our meaſure? He is directly propoſed to us as an example herein. In his common bounty to good and bad, Matt. v. 44, 45. "Love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven;" may ſhew, by reſembling him herein, that you are his genuine offspring: "for he maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth his rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt." In like manner his grace in

giving his Son is set before us in the way of an example, 1 John iv. 10, 11. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." And St. Paul calls us to "be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us:" herein "being followers of God as dear children," Eph. iv. 32. chap. v. 1.

The blessed Jesus, or the Son in our nature, is often in like manner recommended as our example herein. The Gospel-history is one continued account of his benignity and grace to mankind. This brought him down from his throne of glory into our nature and world. His life was one continued course of action for the good of mens souls and bodies. He "went about doing good," Acts x. 38. was full of compassion to people in their various afflictions; and thought nothing too mean, nothing too much to do for the benefit of those who applied to him, and often sought out occasions of doing good offices. And his death was entirely designed to be an expression of his unparalleled love to a sinful world, in conjunction with his love to his Father. And both in life and death he shewed amazing tenderness to his worst enemies. And as this his conduct is in itself most fit to be a moving example to us; so the Gospel often calls us to attend to it as such. The beneficent mind he shewed in condescending to assume our nature, to be so surprizingly humbled in it,

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and to become obedient unto death, is elegantly deſcribed by the apoſtle in Phil. ii. on purpoſe to excite us to have "the ſame mind in us as was in Chriſt." And to diſpoſe Chriſtians to charity to thoſe in diſtreſs, the apoſtle puts them in mind of "the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt," 2 Cor. viii. 9. And ſo in Eph. v. 2. we are exhorted to "walk in love, as Chriſt loved us, and hath given himſelf for us."

4. The bleſſed world we have in view ſhould raiſe our ſouls to this lovely temper. That is a world of perfect love. While the uſe of *faith* and *hope* will be ſuperſeded there, *charity never faileth*, but arrives at its conſummation there; and therefore is *the greateſt* of the three, 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 13.

I ſhall put a period to this diſcourſe with three exhortations upon what has been ſaid.

1. Carefully regulate your love to yourſelves. To preſs you to wiſh well to yourſelves in general, would be ſuperfluous; for it is impoſſible you ſhould do otherwiſe. But to preſs you to the due regulation of this principle, is one main deſign of the Goſpel. Let not your ſelf-love exert itſelf under the government of ill-placed affections, or tumultuous paſſions or unreaſonable humour; but let reaſon and conſideration direct you in the choice of your true happineſs, and then let your purſuit or refuſal of other things be ſubordinated to that. This is a neceſſary point of conduct for your own intereſt and advantage; and it is as neceſſary to conduct you in your duty to your neighbour alſo.

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2. Be on your guard against selfishness, or such an addiction to yourselves, as shall confine your regards within the narrow circle of self. Such a self-love is the main principle of all the evils and disorders in the world; it makes men undutiful to God, and useless, if not pernicious, to those about them.

It would go a great way to the cure of this, if men would entertain a humble sense of their own post in the universe: how small it is in that comparative view, and yet that it is a link in the chain, which, if out of order or separated from the rest, may occasion many disorders. We should think of the dependance we have upon others, and our frequent need of them; and how ill an aspect selfishness has in them, even in our own account. But especially we should often consider ourselves as in common with others, the subjects of the Majesty in the heavens; who assigns every man his post in life, and will call him to an account for his behaviour in it.

3. If we have learned a rectified love and affection to ourselves, let us carry the same temper into our behaviour to others. Then we shall *serve our generation*, and at the same time do it *according to the will of God*, without prejudice to ourselves in any of our truest interests, and indeed with the greatest pleasure to ourselves.

Ever remember the importance and weight of this duty. I should be sorry any Christian should call it dry morality; when it is so essential a branch of christianity, inculcated by our Lord and Master, and all his apostles, explained

explained or hinted at in moſt pages of the Goſpel, made neceſſary to our final acceptance, and frequently urged upon us on the foot of the greateſt and moſt diſtinguiſhing doctrines of the Goſpel.

SERMON IX.

Doing to others as we would be done unto.

MATTH. vii. 12.

Therefore all things, whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

OUR bleſſed Maſter hath given us two ſhort ſummaries of our duty to our neighbour. One is that already inſiſted upon, "Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf;" and the other is contained in the paſſage now read. Both of them are near a-kin, and yet in ſome reſpects different. An appeal is made in both to every man's own ſelf; and the principle of ſelf-love is ſuppoſed to be lawful, natural and neceſſary, when men are pointed to it as the meaſure of their temper and conduct to other people. But there is this difference. In the former we are directly referred to our ſelf-love itſelf, as the meaſure of our love to others, on the ſcore of the relation

relation wherein on many accounts we are to conſider them as ſtanding to us; in this ſummary the expectations we have from others in reference to ourſelves are offered as the meaſure of our acting toward them. The former is moſt properly a rule of charity; but this of righteouſneſs and equity.

In the proſecution of this maxim, I would, I. Offer ſome things for explaining and ſtating it. II. Shew the ſtrong obligations we are under to it. And, III. The great uſefulneſs and advantage of attending to it in our conduct.

I. It may be proper to offer ſome things for the due explaining and ſtating of this maxim. For however excellent and proper it may be, yet if it is not rightly underſtood, we may be miſled under the countenance of it. The following particulars may be worthy of our conſideration.

1. The meaſure propoſed is not what other people *actually do* to us, but what *we would that they ſhould do* to us. I ſhould not need to mention this, but that in fact it is ſo common a meaſure of practice, and what people are apt to allow and juſtify themſelves in, if they go no farther than retaliation. "Such a "man refuſed to do me a kind office, when it "was in his power; and why ſhould I ſerve "him, when it is in mine? He treated me "with rigour and ſeverity, when he had op-"portunity for it, and why ſhould not I make "him a return in the ſame kind?" But this is the language of a heated, and not of a chriſtian ſpirit; of paſſion, and not of reaſon or

grace.

grace. For I cannot be juſtified by that which another does, in doing what I condemn in him: That which was faulty in him, muſt be faulty in me too. The law of nature indeed will allow of ſelf-defence, but not of private revenge, any farther than it is neceſſary to a man's own ſecurity. Chriſtianity eſpecially teaches us a better meaſure of acting than other mens behaviour to us. From this very rule in the text, St. Luke repreſents Chriſt as leading his diſciples to do good offices to thoſe who have never yet obliged them, and even to thoſe who have actually diſobliged them, Luke vi. 31—35. "And as ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye alſo to them likewiſe. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for ſinners alſo love thoſe that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for ſinners do alſo the ſame. And if ye lend to them, of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for ſinners alſo lend to ſinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies." Gratitude for benefits received is an excellent temper, and what is very much wanting in the world; but it is not the height to which Chriſtianity calls us, and to which the maxim in the text ſhould carry us: We ſhould ſhew kindneſs, as we have opportunity, to thoſe who have not conferred any benefit upon us already, and even to ſuch who have done us ill offices. We have a plain rule againſt governing our conduct to others by their ill uſage of us. Rom. xii. 19—21. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourſelves,

yourſelves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay it, ſaith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirſt give him drink. For in ſo doing thou ſhalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good."

2. What we actually would that others ſhould do to us, is not in all caſes a rule of our duty to them; but the lawfulneſs of the action is to be preſuppoſed. It will not follow that I ought to do or to forbear a thing to my neighbour, or that I may do ſo, merely becauſe I am content or even deſirous that he ſhould do or forbear the like to me. That inclination and deſire of mine muſt firſt be known to agree with the law of God. A notorious drunkard may be willing to be intoxicated and made a beaſt by another: But it is not therefore one jot the more lawful for him to do the like to another in his turn. A man reſolutely ſet upon an evil courſe, cares not to be diſturbed in it by the reproofs or counſels of his ſuperiors or friends: But that does not leſſen his obligation to be a monitor to other ſinners, eſpecially to thoſe under his care and charge. It is his ſin, and owing to his inſenſibleneſs of his own true intereſt, that he woud not that others ſhould do ſo to him; and it is his additional ſin, that he neglects on his part what the law of God has made his duty to others. A man's deſire, that others ſhould either do an unlawful thing, or neglect their duty to himſelf, will not juſtify or excuſe

cuſe the like evil actions or omiſſions in him. To ſuppoſe that it would, muſt be to ſubject the holy and righteous law of God to mens irregular inclinations and luſts, and ſo to render it of no effect. Our deſires therefore from others, muſt firſt be known to be fit and reaſonable, and not diſagreeable to the will of God, before they are made the meaſure of our conduct to them.

3. When we and others are in different circumſtances, we are not obliged by this meaſure of action to do exactly the ſame things to them, as we deſire or expect from them; but the ſame things in our circumſtances, as we ſhould expect from them if they were in our condition and we in theirs. God in the courſe of nature and providence places men in different relations one to another, in various ſtations and conditions, and has affixed duties peculiar to each of theſe. Now the intention of this maxim cannot be to confound all relations, and the duties belonging to them; as if, for inſtance, all that a father may expect from a child, or a maſter from a ſervant, or a prince from his ſubjects, was therefore to be done by ſuch ſuperiors to their inferiors. But the plain meaning is, that a father, a maſter, a prince ſhould conſider what he ſhould reaſonably deſire and expect from one in the correſpondent relation, if he was a child, a ſervant, or a ſubject; and then act accordingly. Thus, after the apoſtle had laid down the duty of ſervants, he directs, Eph. vi. 9. "And ye maſters do the ſame things unto them;" not juſt the ſame actions

as they by their relation are obliged to do to you; but see that you perform the duty of your place, as you expect of them the duty of theirs; and with such a manner of behaviour in your peculiar station, as you would account equitable from a master, if you were servants yourselves: One instance of which he immediately mentions, forbearing threatening, all rough, morose or churlish words or actions, when there is no necessity for them.

4. We are not obliged to do all that to others, which we might probably be glad they would do to us, if we were in their case; but all that we could expect from them, as matter of right and duty. It is hardly to be doubted, but any poor man would be glad, that a rich person would not only supply his extreme necessity, but give him a good part of his estate, so as to make his circumstances easy and plentiful: And it is very likely, that if we were poor, we might be of this mind. A rich man, who is master of his own estate, may lawfully gratify such a desire; but then he may lawfully forbear it also. Now that such a generous action of a rich man would be very welcome to any poor man, and to ourselves in particular if we were poor, cannot be said to lay an obligation upon any to do so much. Those in prosperous circumstances are bound by this rule to do to another, not all that they might in his circumstances be glad of, but all that they would have good reason to expect upon the foundation of justice, or charity, or friendship or relation.

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The ſenſe of our Lord's maxim amounts to this: "In all your dealings with other "men, ſuppoſe yourſelves in the ſame par- "ticular ſtate and circumſtances wherein they "are; and think, what treatment, what kind- "neſs, what allowances you would reckon "yourſelves to have a juſt claim to expect at "their hands, if they were in your caſe, and "you in theirs; and then be the ſame to "them in your thoughts, and words, and ac- "tions, as you would have them to be to "you: And never allow yourſelves to do "that to others, which you would account in- "jurious or matter of juſt complaint in your "own caſe."

II. I proceed to ſhew the ſtrong obligations we are under to be of this temper.

1. It is founded in the reaſon of things, and is one of the plaineſt dictates and laws of nature: Such a precept as approves itſelf to the mind of a reaſonable creature, as ſoon as he hears and underſtands it, ſo as not to need any laboured proof. Every man is ready to own the equity of it in theory; even ſuch whoſe vicious and depraved inclinations carry them off from the practice; thoſe who will not make it the rule of their own actions, yet expect others to make it the rule of theirs, and are ready to complain when it is not obſerved to themſelves. It is indeed the baſis of all juſtice and equity between man and man; every inſtance of which may be reduced to this meaſure, and proved by it.

The obligation to it reſults from the fameneſs of nature which our great Creator has given

given to all mankind; as all descending from one original, consisting of like souls and bodies: And therefore whatever rights one has by virtue of this nature, must be common to all, and equal in all. In respect of nature, we are all upon a level, and every man stands equally obliged to another. I am equally obliged to be just, and kind, and grateful to another, as he is obliged to be so to me; because God made us all alike in the essential state and perfections of our nature. For accidental differences between men, they cannot cancel or lessen these common rights which are founded in nature: And besides that it is very possible in the changeableness of human affairs, and frequently seen in experience, that such accidental differences may cease, or the conditions of men be perfectly inverted. He who is now a servant, may become a master; and the master may be reduced to the state of a servant: The rich may be abased, and the poor exalted. I may come to be in the station, or relation, or condition of another man, with whom I compare myself; and actually need that office from him, which he now expects from me. This makes it ever reasonable and prudent too, to put myself in his circumstances, since they may be my own; and to behave to him accordingly.

This maxim is so agreeable to natural light, that some heathen writers inculcate the same thing in sense. Especially the Greek orator Isocrates, applies it to several cases. He lays it down as the first maxim of virtue necessary

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to be attended to by youth, next to the veneration of God; [a] "Be such to your parents, as you would have your children be to you." And he advises princes to [b] "carry it so toward neighbouring communities that are weaker" than their own, "as they would have those which are stronger behave to them." So he represents a wise and good king directing his subjects to [c] "approve themselves such to others" under them, "as they expected him to be themselves;" and [d] "not to do to others, what they cared not to bear from others." We are told, that [e] "the founders of the empire of the Inca's in Peru (which the tradition of that people represents as an empire of vast antiquity) "taught this as one of their first "rules, and indeed upon a very clear and co"gent reason; that men should neither say "nor do any thing to others, that they were "not willing others should say or do to them; "because it was against all reason, to make "one law for ourselves, and another for other "people." Would to God, that all Christians would govern themselves by so clear and undeniable a principle.

2. "This is the law and the prophets." So our Saviour declares in the text: That is, all the duties to our neighbour prescribed by Moses, or by the succeeding prophets under the Old Testament, are comprehended in this, and may be reduced to it; they are but so

[a] Orat. ad Demonic. Ed. H. Steph. p. 4. [b] Id. ad Nicocl. Orat. ii. p. 19. [c] Id. ad Nicocl. Orat. iii. p. 37. [d] Ibid. p. 39. [e] Sir Will Temple's Miscel. Part II. Ess. ii. Sect. 3.

many branches and explications of this general rule. For the assistance of mens weakness and unthoughtfulness, God saw mete, when he was pleased to vouchsafe a revelation, to be express in enjoining the several particulars of social duty: he knew, that in the present depraved state, when our sinful prejudices and selfish biasses are so many and so strong, all would be little enough to awaken men to the consideration of their duty: but it is much to the honour of this maxim, that it is the short contents of all the directions left in the name of God by the law and the prophets, how one man should behave to another.

3. It is still more strongly enforced upon us by christianity.

Our Lord and Master himself has left us this summary; and that at the close of his most instructive sermon, wherein he had so clearly and distinctly explained our duty in the most important particulars of it.

The context enforces it by an additional motive; which is implied in the word that introduces the precept, *Therefore*. In the Verses before, Christ encourages us to apply to God in our various wants, with an assurance of his gracious answer to our requests: and to animate our hope, argues from the readiness of earthly parents to gratify the desires of their children, to the greater readiness of our common Father in heaven to fulfil the proper desires of us his children on earth: Whereupon he adds, "Therefore all things, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do

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ye even so to them;" making it an inference from God's benignity to us. And the deduction may be made in point of ingenuity and gratitude. Doth the great God, who is infinitely above us, and can never be capable of needing any thing from us, readily give to mankind whatever they can reasonably expect from a kind and loving Father? And is there not much more reason that we should deal so one with another? If we are obliged to be followers of God as dear children, we should readily afford others, after that bright and disinterested pattern, all needful aid, which they may desire of us, as a matter of equity, or humanity, or charity. Or, this duty to our neighbour may be proposed as a necessary term of God's hearing our requests. Such is the benignity of his nature, that he is very ready to hear us; but he has fixed a constitution, which gives no foundation to hope that he will graciously answer our prayers, if we are unjust or uncharitable to our neighbours. Therefore that we may have the benefit of such an encouraging declaration, let us diligently attend to all the duties of civil righteousness; for God will deal with us, as we deal with others. Declarations to this purpose are very express in Scripture, Isa. i. 15—18. "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you, yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for

for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."—Chap. lviii. 9, 10. "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am: If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul."

It may be added, that the Gospel has more clearly put all men upon a level, than seemed to be done by the Jewish covenant of peculiarity, as was shewn in a former discourse; and therefore strengthens our obligation to make this a rule of our conduct to all men.

III. I am to shew the vast usefulness and advantage of this measure of behaviour.

1. It is equally fit for the direction of all. It is indeed so simple and obvious a measure of acting, that the plainest and most illiterate people, who are not capable of long and intricate reasonings in order to the discovery of their duty, may receive light from it, as well as those of the most enlarged capacities and attainments. Here is a short and easy way to come at the knowledge of their duty; namely, to turn inward and catechise themselves in such a familiar manner as this: "Should not I esteem it a hardship to be "treated myself, as I am about to treat this "person? Why then should I put that upon "him, which I should account injurious from "him? What should I think myself to have "reason to expect from another in the same

"circumstances

" circumſtances or relation wherein I now " ſtand, if I had occaſion for his good offices? " Should not I reckon the ſame expectations " reaſonable from me, and act accordingly?" This inward monitor may immediately and eaſily bring any man to the point of duty.

2. It will be of ſingular uſe in ſudden emergencies. Many caſes occur in life, wherein we have not time for long deliberation, but muſt ſpeedily and upon the ſpot determine either to do or to forbear a thing. In ſuch a caſe, the wiſeſt as well as the weakeſt have ſometimes need of a ſhort rule, to which they may have recourſe for preſent direction. This is one advantage of having the mind well ſtored with the expreſs precepts of revelation, that we may immediately call them to mind in an hour of temptation or upon ſudden incident, to point us to our duty, and engage us to the practice of it upon the authority of God. Now this one general rule will hardly fail to furniſh us with ſufficient light for our immediate conduct in any part of ſocial duty. That may emphatically be ſaid of this command, which Moſes applies more generally; it " is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off—But it is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayeſt do it," Deut. xxx. 11, 14.

3. It will contribute to impartiality in our judging concerning our duty to others. When we judge amiſs in any caſe to the prejudice of our neighbour's juſt claims from us, it is owing to an inordinate ſelf-love, which gives us too ſtrong a biaſs to that ſide of the queſ-

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tion that is moſt in our own favour. But if we will change perſons, and ſuppoſe thoſe concerned on the other ſide of the queſtion to be our very ſelves, then a real hardſhip to them will appear in its native colours. In one ſenſe we ſhall put ourſelves out of the reckoning, that is, as far as ſelf-intereſt gave an irregular biaſs; by putting ourſelves into the reckoning in another ſenſe, that is, by conſidering what judgment we ſhould paſs, if the caſe was our own. So that this is the ſureſt way to form an impartial judgment.

4. This will miniſter light both in what we ought to do, and in what we ought to forbear, toward other men. It is a rule that holds both negatively and poſitively, though the text indeed only expreſſes it in the poſitive form. To do to others what we have reaſon to inſiſt that they ſhould not do to us, is unjuſt and injurious; and not to do what we might reaſonably deſire at their hands, is at leaſt unequal and uncharitable.

5. This will contribute to make our duty eaſy and pleaſant; when it is ſet in ſo advantageous a light, and recommended by ſo near and moving an argument. This maxim, if we attend to it, will not only be full of light but of heat alſo. It will ſweetly draw us to our duty by the moſt ingenuous motive; and make thoſe very conſiderations from ourſelves to puſh us on to a due behaviour to others, which without ſuch a change of perſons are the common impediments of it.

6. It will be of ſervice to diſcover and inforce our duty to others in the whole com-

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pafs of it. It will be an univerfal directory. Every obligation to other men, which either can be made out by other reafonings to be a dictate of nature, or which is inculcated by expref revelation, may be deduced from this maxim. Our own minds, as far as we are juftly appriſed of our own intereft, will give fuffrage to the juftice and goodnefs of it in our own cafe, and therefore ought to do the like in the cafe of others. For inftance,

In common and general converfation, this maxim will be a proper monitor for decency and regularity of behaviour. Reafon and Scripture prefcribe to us modefty and humility in our converfe, without affuming and overbearing airs; courteoufnefs, civility, and refpect to all according to their ftations and characters; a care not to give offence by word or action; meeknefs, and the government of our tempers in oppofition to indecent heats and outrageous paffions. And this rule directs and ftrongly engages to juft the fame things. A reflection upon what we expect or cenfure in other people's converfation with us, will direct us to all that in our own conduct which is the beauty and pleafure of fociety, and warn us againft thofe things which are the blemifh and the bane of it.

In negociation and commerce, the fame rule will prefcribe the moft exact juftice and righteoufnefs in all our dealings. We fhall not take advantage of our own power, and another's poverty and helplefs condition, or his neceffary dependance upon us, to oppreſs him or bear hard upon him in any inftance; the rich

rich will not grind the faces of the poor, when this is made the rule of acting. What should I think of being so used, if I was in their condition? The strictest honesty and truth in trade, would flow from the same principle. The apostle's precept, "that no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter," 1 Thess. iv. 6. would be the easiest thing in the world to practise; no man would find any temptation to the contrary, if all would but agree to observe this rule: for who is not ready to complain and clamour, when he finds himself over-reached and cheated by another? Would any man allow himself to have *divers weights and measures* (in the Hebrew, it is, *a weight and a weight, a measure and a measure*, that is one to buy, and another to sell by) if he did but allow himself to consider, that it is not only *an abomination to the Lord*, but even to himself, when men use him in that manner? Prov. xx. 10. Would you allow yourselves to make a false representation of the goodness or value of that which you expose to sale? or, on the other hand, to depreciate the value of a commodity below what you esteem it to be intrinsically worth, when you are a buyer; if you made it a law to yourselves to do to others as you would be done unto? Would you take advantage of other people's unskilfulness, or of their necessity, to put ill things upon them for good, or at an exorbitant price, if this was your measure of acting? This principle would carry you honestly and honourably to the execution of every contract and engagement, to the utmost of your power; to

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the payment of your debts, to the performance of every truſt you have undertaken, with exact fidelity; for would you not in juſtice expect the ſame yourſelves? Abundance of practices in the courſe of buſineſs, for which people think they can offer a plauſible excuſe, would not bear a trial by this ſtandard; and would not ſit eaſy upon their conſciences, if they did but accuſtom themſelves to appeal to it, however they may make a ſhift to juſtify themſelves before men.

In caſes where others need our compaſſion and kindneſs, this will be equally ſerviceable. How ready will a man be to do good offices to others, according to their neceſſity and his own ability, who conſults his own heart, and what bowels of compaſſion he would think himſelf intitled to, if he was the needy perſon? If he would allow himſelf to think it very poſſible that this may come to be his own caſe? and eſpecially if he muſt recollect, that this has already been his caſe in fact, and what his expectations then were? God touches the Iſraelites in this feeling ſtrain, Exod. xxiii. 9. "Thou ſhalt not oppreſs a ſtranger; for ye know the heart of a ſtranger, ſeeing ye were ſtrangers in the land of Egypt." To know the heart of another in diſtreſs or want, or deſtitute of friends, either by conſidering the circumſtances of ſuch a condition, though we have not ſhared in it ourſelves, or eſpecially from our own former feelings; would produce a tenderneſs and enlarged heart to others in miſery. And it would induce us to an obliging and compaſſionate manner, as well as to

give them our assistance itself; to do it chearfully, without tedious intreaty, without a haughtiness of behaviour, with all the marks of good-will and complacency; for if we were in distress, we should think the value of a benefit greatly lessened by a disagreeable manner of conferring it.

In censures and reflections upon others, this rule will be of singular use. If we examine our own hearts, do we not think that we have reason on our side, when we blame others for meddling with our character to our disadvantage, while they have no concern with us? or for putting the worst construction upon doubtful actions? or for spreading accusations of us, before they were well assured of the truth of them? or for proclaiming even our real faults, when they are not able to plead any justifiable reason for it from charity to others, or from the demands of justice? or for their not making reasonable allowances for lesser faults? if they should, for instance, represent that as *a beam in our eye*, which they let pass *as a mote in their own?* In such cases as these, should we not think ourselves aggrieved? Let us turn the tables, and beware of giving reason to others for any such complaints concerning us.

In case of provocations, this precept would be a good clue to our thoughts and actions. We should complain of the hastiness of our neighbour, if he was quick in resenting a word or action of ours, which we are conscious was not ill intended: Of his severity and uncharitableness, if he should presently take advantage

tage of a rash or unguarded expression or action, to expose us to disgrace, or expence, or punishment: and of his inexorableness and cruelty, if, when he had us at mercy, he should not be ready to forgive upon proper acknowledgement and reasonable satisfaction. If men were of this mind on all sides in the world, there would be few quarrels, or they would be short-lived, and not run into the pernicious and extravagant consequences which too often ensue upon them.

In the several relations of life, this would secure the peace and order both of families and communities, and of all ranks of people. Was but this precept ever present in the mind, the greatest would be restrained from insolence, oppression and tyranny; and, on the other hand, it would be as effectual to silence many murmurings and complaints of those in inferior stations, because superiors do not every thing to their mind, though they cannot charge them with injustice; or because of some lesser faults, though for the main they fill up their stations well. If we were in their stations, should we be content to be arraigned at every one's humour, and censured without a crime alledged? should not we expect allowances for multiplicity of cares and various expectations from us? Let this teach us a decent behaviour to our governors. A son growing up to maturity will not think it hard to continue his dutiful respect and submission to his parents, if he thinks what he should reasonably expect from children of his own: Nor would parents willingly provoke their children

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to wrath by cauſeleſs or immoderate ſeverities, if they recollected that they once knew the heart of a child.

And, to mention no more, this rule would be of admirable uſe in religious differences. Had it been attended to it would effectually have prevented the entrance of perſecution into the world. No man then would bear hard upon another, when he has it in his power, becauſe of his different ſentiments or practices in matters of religion, as long as he is peaceable and inoffenſive; for who would be willing to be ſo ſerved himſelf? Every man who has a conſcience, muſt be ſenſible how uncomfortable a thing it is to offend it; and will reckon it in his own caſe an injury in the moſt tender point, if he is hindered from acting correſpondent to it. Suppoſe but others to have as much conſcience as you, and to be as tender of offending it; and you would never find in your heart to tempt them by ſeverities to do ſo. The ſame principle would make chriſtians in their debates about religion very cautious of paſſing ſevere cenſures one upon another, of managing their conteſts with wrath and bitterneſs, or of marking others with the opprobrious names of Schiſmatics or Hereticks: For who does not complain of ſuch uſage in his own caſe?

I conclude with ſome reflections.

1. How happy would it be for the world, if the chriſtian inſtitution was generally and heartily entertained? If even this maxim was fairly inſcribed on every heart, and all ſorts of people were reſolved to conduct themſelves by

by it? It would produce a sort of heaven upon earth, and revive a golden age. Bloody wars and vexatious litigations would soon cease; private injuries and domestic contests would be laid asleep; society would be pleasant, and commerce safe; religion would flourish, prejudices abate, and truth prevail by its own evidence. It is a remarkable passage which Lampridius tells us concerning one of the best of the Roman Emperors, Alexander Severus, in his account of his life; That "if any of his army in a march stepped "out of the road to plunder any man's pos-"session; according to the rank of the of-"fender, either he was punished in the em-"peror's presence; or if his quality set him "above corporal punishment, the emperor "would sharply expostulate with him, and "say, Would you be willing to have this "done unto your estate, which you have "done to another?" And says the historian, "It was a common saying with him, which "he had heard from some Jews or Christians, "which he carefully retained, and which he "ordered to be proclaimed by the common "cryer, when he corrected any man; Do not "that to another, which ye would not have "to be done to you. He had such a love "for this maxim, that he ordered it to be in-"scribed upon his palace, and upon the pub-"lic works." And shall not we, who call ourselves Christians, pay an equal respect to it.

2. Of what importance to the whole of religion and goodness is self-acquaintance and reflection? Our obligations to God himself

presupposes a knowledge of the natures he has given us, as the foundation in which they are laid. And so we see do all our duties to our fellow-creatures. If we were more conversant at home, that would be our best preparation for all the duties we owe to other beings without us, either to our Creator or our fellow-creatures.

3. This gives the strongest reason to acknowledge, that God's commandments are not grievous. They are founded in the reason of things, and our very nature and most familiar sentiments point to them. None of them are any farther unacceptable and ungrateful, than as we are gone off from the dictates of our natures: And as far as we come to ourselves again, we shall relish God's commands.

4. How inexcusable then must it be in reasonable creatures, especially who profess Christianity, if they govern not themselves by this rule? It must be acknowledged with grief and shame, that the practice of the generality of nominal Christians is the reverse of this. Who would think when he looks abroad into the world, and judges of things merely by the extravagances which may be seen every day, that the maxim in the text is a plain dictate of reason, to the justice of which every man is forced to assent? that our Lord and Master has prescribed it in the plainest terms? that it is a rule applicable to the various cases of life? How comes it, that a precept so clear, so familiar, so comprehensive, yet has so little influence? Certainly it is to be ascribed

cribed to one of these two things: Either that men have this principle in their heads, but not in their hearts; they are not altogether unacquainted with the notion, but their appetites and passions have the over-bearing sway: or they forget this maxim, so as not to have actual recourse to it in the various cases of life. Whatever be the reason, we must certainly be speechless in the great day, if such a truth as this be either a doubtful or an useless speculation with us.

Let us therefore earnestly pray to God, that he will *write this law in our hearts*, and that he will *keep it forever in the imaginations of the thoughts of our heart.* And let us not suffer it to lie dormant, but endeavour to have it ever present and ready for use; that it may actually be a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths. How pleasant will our reflections be, when conscience can bear us this testimony? When other men violate this rule in their behaviour to us, it will be a refreshing support, to be conscious that we have not deserved it by an unrighteous conduct to them, nor returned their injurious usage. We may look up with the greatest freedom and confidence to God the common patron of the injured; and in this, and all other applications to him, have the firmer hope of a gracious answer, when this is the temper of our minds. Yea, it will be a happy presage of our arrival at last in the blessed world, where all the holy inhabitants are fully of this temper, and act eternally with uninterrupted harmony and concert one towards another.

SER-

SERMON X.

Christian Meekness.

COLOSS. iii. 12. middle of the verse.

Put on—Meekness.

THIS part of the christian temper might have been considered as a branch of our duty to ourselves; the regulations of our passions, as well as of our appetites, being a necessary part of self-government, which we owe to ourselves. But I have chosen rather to treat of it among the instances of a right temper to our neighbours, because the main expressions of it immediately relate to them.

And in consideration of this grace, I shall proceed in the same method as I have done upon several others: To explain the nature of it, and then to shew our obligations, as Christians, to put it on.

I. I would explain the nature of christian meekness.

The Scripture leads us indeed to consider it partly in relation to God; but principally and most frequently in relation to men.

1. It may be considered partly in relation to God. There is a meekness which becomes

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us towards him, and there are two remarkable inſtances of it.

(1.) A full and ready ſubmiſſion of ſoul to the authority of his word; ſo as not to ſuffer any prepoſſeſſions of ſentiments, or former inclinations, to riſe up againſt the ſignifications of his will, as ſoon as that is made known to us. This I underſtand by the character of the meek, in Pſal. xxv. 9. "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way:" And in that prophecy of Chriſt, Iſa. lxi. 1. "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek:" And by the temper with which St. James directs us to receive the word of God, Jam. i. 21. "Receive with meekneſs the ingrafted word, which is able to ſave your ſouls." In all which places, meekneſs ſignifies not only a ſedate compoſure of mind, free from ruffle and hurry; but alſo a teachable, tractable temper, ariſing from a diffidence of ourſelves, and a ſenſe of our need of divine light and conduct: That we have the proper diſpoſition of learners, willing to hear and receive God's inſtructions; and that therefore we are willing to give up any prejudices which ſwayed us before, upon a diſcovery of his mind to the contrary.

This ſort of meekneſs is a neceſſary qualification for the obedience of faith, and for the ſucceſs and efficacy of God's word upon us. We ſhould be of Samuel's temper, 1 Sam. iii. 9. "Speak Lord, for thy ſervant heareth." Where there is plain revelation, we muſt meekly ſubmit, and yield up any different

ferent apprehension to the declarations of him who is truth itself; and in precepts of duty, chearfully and readily acquiesce in the significations of his pleasure without any more ado. He is not meek towards God, who is not content to believe what he plainly reveals, unless he is shewn how it is; that is, in other words, unless God will please to make him as wise as himself; or who is not willing to sacrifice all his present inclinations, and change any present practice, upon God's sole authority; like those in Acts x. 33. "Now we are all here present before God, to hear what is commanded of God."

(2.) A chearful and absolute resignation to his providence, is another branch of meekness towards God; in opposition to fretfulness and murmuring. Though God allows the complaints of nature under our burdens and exercises; yet he expects we should check and suppress all complaints of him, every impeachment of his justice, wisdom and goodness in his dispensation. It is a meek spirit, to "be dumb and not open our mouths" against any thing which God does, Psal. xxxix. 9. When we have humbly prayed for any temporal good, if he sees meet to deny it; as soon as his pleasure is known by the event, we should behave like David upon the death of his son, 2 Sam. xii. 22, 23. "He said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again?" It is

meekness

meekneſs not to charge God fooliſhly, but to charge ourſelves with our own ſins, when he chaſtens us for them; and therefore to "accept the puniſhment of our iniquities," Lev. xxvi. 41.

Theſe are expreſſions of meekneſs towards God: And every man who obſerves his own heart, will be ſenſible that he hath no ſmall occaſion at ſome times to rule his own ſpirit, in order to keep it under the rule of God. But,

2. The Scripture leads us principally and moſt frequently to conſider meekneſs in relation to other men. And ſo it is plainly to be underſtood here; for it ſtands in connection with ſeveral graces and duties which refer to men. The meek are ſuch as exerciſe themſelves in a careful reſtraint and regulation of their paſſions, reducing them within the bounds of reaſon and religion; and ſo are, in their general character, of a ſweet and eaſy, a courteous and obliging behaviour. It conſiſts, and expreſſes itſelf, in the following things.

(1.) In a calmneſs of temper, and behaviour thereupon, under provocations. This is its moſt direct and eminent province.

The meek will not take offence haſtily, and without juſt reaſon; but be very careful that they "be not angry without a cauſe," Mark v. 22. We ſhould not raſhly ſuppoſe, that a provocation is meant. A thing may at firſt carry that aſpect, and yet there may be no deſign either of affront or prejudice; and then certainly what was not ill intended, ſhould

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not be ill taken. We ſhould not give way to ſuſpicions and ſurmiſes, which cannot be ſupported with good evidence; nor put the worſt conſtruction upon words and actions, but the beſt that they will admit. Reſentment ſhould not be allowed to riſe, at leaſt ſhould be checked, till we have carefully conſidered whether there be ground for it. How much of mad paſſion would be prevented, if this rule was obſerved? This is included in the exhortation to "be ſlow to wrath," Jam. i. 19. And in theſe properties of charity, that it "is not eaſily provoked, thinketh no evil, hopeth all things." 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 7.

Meekneſs will not allow reſentments to riſe higher than the merit of the offence given. A trivial injury, a reproachful word, a ſmall indiſcretion, a caſual loſs not worth ſpeaking of, raiſes in many the moſt outrageous paſſions: Whereas a meek frame of ſpirit would eſteem ſuch things either not worthy of any notice, or to deſerve but a very ſlight one.

But ſuppoſing a real and great provocation, a meek man will keep a ſtrict guard upon his own ſpirit and words; that his mind be not inflamed by ill uſage, nor other peoples ſins draw him in to "ſpeak unadviſedly with his lips;" for which in a particular inſtance Moſes is blamed, Pſal. cvi. 33. He was refuſed an entrance into Canaan upon that very account; though in his general character he is pronounced to have been the meekeſt man upon earth, Num. xii. 3. Meekneſs will make us careful, not to "render railing for railing;"

railing;" but rather, if poſſible, to break the force of other peoples unreaſonable anger by gentle returns. "Soft anſwers turn away wrath," Prov. xv. 1. We ſhould gladly try to win with kindneſs a man that hath injured us: to "overcome evil with good," Rom. xii. 21. How much more pleaſant would it be thus to gain our brother, than by unhallowed tranſports of paſſion, to break in upon our own peace, and make ourſelves tranſgreſſors?

Meekneſs will make us ſlow in uſing rough methods to right ourſelves even from conſiderable injuries, which we ought not to ſit down eaſy under: It will diſpoſe to try the mildeſt ways firſt, to bring people, if poſſible, by them to reaſon; to try arguments before puniſhment, and conference before law, and private admonition before we make a public example. And if at laſt our own ſecurity, or the common good ſhall oblige to ſeek public juſtice againſt any, which certainly ſometimes may be the caſe; this ſhould be done without hatred to their perſons, and merely with a view to reach thoſe lawful and commendable ends. Or if we are neceſſitated, in a caſe of property, to appeal to the deciſion of the law; care is to be taken that this difference upon a point of intereſt between us and our neighbour, be managed with all the temper that may be, inſtead of being widened by bitter reflections and paſſionate exclamations. So meekneſs will direct.

It will always keep us in readineſs to be

reconciled, when an offence is acknowledged, and reaſonable ſatisfaction offered. The Goſpel teaches us to be rarely and hardly provoked; but to be quickly and eaſily pacified. "Anger reſteth in the boſom of fools," Eccl. vii. 9. And therefore with that difficult precept of "being angry and not ſinning," it is connected, that we ſhould be particularly watchful againſt the continuance of paſſion: "Let not the ſun go down upon your wrath," Eph. iv. 26. Implacableneſs is eminently the reverſe of the chriſtian temper. When Peter aſked Chriſt, "How oft ſhall my brother ſin againſt me, and I forgive him? until ſeven times?" Chriſt makes him this return, "I ſay not unto thee, Until ſeven times;" not only ſo far, "but until ſeventy times ſeven," i. e. be it ever ſo often that he hath offended thee, yet if thou canſt have hope that he is come to a better mind, thou ſhouldſt be ready to paſs it by. Or if he ſhould perſiſt in his ill mind, meekneſs ſhould guard us againſt all malice and ill-will, and make us ready to help even the worſt enemy in the common offices of life, if he need it; and heartily to pray for him, eſpecially for his repentance.

(2.) Meekneſs ſhould expreſs itſelf in a care to avoid giving offence to others, and a modeſty of behaviour for that purpoſe towards all. St. Paul directs Titus to recommend meekneſs in this ſenſe to Chriſtians, Tit. iii. 2. "Put them in mind — to ſpeak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, ſhewing all meekneſs unto all men." As this grace will conduct us to a proper behaviour under

under ill treatment from others; ſo it will teach us to moderate our affections and paſſions in ſuch a manner, as not willingly to give offence to others, and to behave in a courteous and affable manner towards all men. As *charity*, ſo meekneſs *is kind*, and *doth not behave itſelf unſeemly*, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5. It will make a man obſervant on the tempers of others, and willingly to deny his own humour in little things, rather than give them uneaſineſs; and cautious that neither his words nor actions may carry any thing in them unneceſſarily provoking. A meek man will not be overbearing in company, and full of himſelf to the neglect of others; but will ſtudiouſly expreſs civility to all, agreeable to their ſtations. Moſt men know how to do all this, when they apprehend it neceſſary to ſerve a preſent ſecular end: But the grace of meekneſs would teach us to make it the habitual exerciſe of our lives, out of a ſenſe of our duty to our God, and love to our neighbour.

(3.) Meekneſs is ſhewn in a modeſt comporting of ourſelves to our ſtation and circumſtances.

It will diſpoſe thoſe who are in any ſtation of inferiority, contentedly to ſubmit to the duties of that ſtation. It will incline children to "obey their parents in all things, becauſe this is well-pleaſing to the Lord," Col. iii. 20. And ſervants to "be obedient to them that are their maſters, in ſingleneſs of their heart, as unto Chriſt; with good-will doing ſervice as unto the Lord, and not to men," Eph. vi. 5, 7. Or, as it is expreſſed in another place,

Tit.

Tit. ii. 9. "to pleaſe them well in all things, not anſwering again." It will have a like influence upon ſubjects, to induce them to "be ſubject to the higher powers, not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake," Rom. xiii. 5. And we find "the ornament of a meek and a quiet ſpirit" particularly recommended to wives, 1 Pet. iii. 4. The meek will chearfully pay "honour to whom honour is due," and "fear to whom fear:" it will be no uneaſy thing to them; but the froward fret at any yoke.

On the other hand, the ſame excellent temper will form perſons in ſuperior relations, or under ſmiling providences, to a lowly and condeſcending behaviour. Parents ſhould exerciſe this frame in their management of their children, not behaving toward them in tranſports of paſſion. "Ye fathers," ſays the apoſtle, "provoke not your children to wrath," Eph. vi. 4. *Huſbands* are commanded to *love their wives, and not to be bitter againſt them*, Col. iii. 19. And *maſters* are directed to treat their ſervants with lenity, *forbearing threatening; knowing that their maſter alſo is in heaven*, Eph. vi. 9. Theſe are all precepts of meekneſs to thoſe in ſuperior relations. And the ſame ſhould appear in ſuperiority of rank or circumſtances. The meek man is not aſſuming in grandeur, riches, or power; but his meekneſs ſhines more brightly for being ſet in a more conſpicuous light. The meekneſs of a man in obſcurity, is not ſo eaſily diſtinguiſhed from the neceſſity of his condition: but when it appears in a higher orb, or upon remarkable

markable advancement, it hath more clearly the aſpect of virtue. When people treat their inferiors with due regard, are eaſy of acceſs, ready to do them any offices of humanity as they have opportunity, not apt to take exception at little things, or to uſe the advantages of their power to revenge every ſmall provocation offered them: hereby they diſplay their meekneſs as well as their humility. When upon advantages gained, upon ſecurities from their enemies power which they had not before, they do not inſult, or behave unſeemly, but with temper and moderation, and ſhew a greater diſpoſition than ever to charity and reconciliation; this ſhews a power over their own ſpirits, or eminent meekneſs.

(4.) Meekneſs is particularly to be expreſſed by a temperate and a calm behaviour in matters of religion. To break out into anger and paſſion here, appears as if we thought that "the wrath of man worketh the righteouſneſs of God;" which St James aſſures us that it cannot do, Jam. i. 20. Men who pretend to knowledge in religion beyond their neighbours, will confute their own pretenſions, if they have not learned this leſſon of it, Jam. iii. 13. "Who is a wiſe man, and endued with knowledge among you." Many of the Jews to whom he wrote made great pretences to this in matters of religion: the apoſtle therefore ſays to them; "Let him ſhew out of a good converſation his works with meekneſs of wiſdom." Let him exemplify the works to which wiſdom directs with meekneſs: or let him ſhew by his charity and meekneſs to

his brethren, that his wiſdom is ſuperior: and thereupon he goes on to ſhew, that all bitter zeal is "earthly, ſenſual and deviliſh," and hath no alliance with the wiſdom which comes from above. We have no other method preſcribed or allowed by the Goſpel, even to thoſe who moſt obſtinately oppoſe it, but "in meekneſs to inſtruct thoſe who oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2 Tim. ii. 25. And inſtead of any effects of rage and paſſion to bring men to our ſentiments, we are taught to "be ready to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh us a reaſon of the hope that is in us," the grounds of our perſuaſion, "with meekneſs and fear," 1 Pet. iii. 15. The ſame ſpirit and temper is to be carried into chriſtian ſocieties themſelves; and offenders againſt the law of Chriſt are to be treated, and their recovery endeavoured, "in the ſpirit of meekneſs," Gal. vi. 1. So that though poſſibly there hath not been a greater violation of this holy temper through every age, in any one inſtance than in matters of religion; yet indeed there is no caſe wherein the exerciſe of it is more indiſpenſibly required.

II. I am to ſhew our obligations, as Chriſtians, to the exerciſe of this grace. And certainly much more of real chriſtianity lies in it, than moſt people are willing to think. The following conſiderations may ſhew the importance of meekneſs.

1. It is a frequent precept of the Goſpel. This plainly appears from many paſſages already

ready mentioned in giving an account of its nature, and might be made more evident from others. It is preſſed upon us as an eminent branch of that walk which becomes our chriſtian calling, Eph. iv. 1, 2. "I the priſoner of the Lord, beſeech you, that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." If you would know how that is to be done, the practice of humility and meekneſs lead the van in the apoſtle's direction: "With all lowlineſs and meekneſs." If this command be habitually neglected, it will prove us inſincere, and as truly as any other inſtance of ſtated diſobedience.

2. It is repreſented as eſſential to a true Chriſtian, as much as any other particular grace or virtue. "If any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his:" And if we have the Spirit, we have his fruits in us: now is this one of his neceſſary fruits. And it is remarkable, that when the apoſtle reckons up ſeveral of them, he not only mentions meekneſs itſelf by name as one; but indeed the greateſt part of his inſtances are either branches of meekneſs, or very nearly allied to it: ſuch as "love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs," or beneficence, Gal. v. 22, 23. And among "the works of the fleſh," to which theſe are oppoſed, we find "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, envyings," ver. 20, 21. Again, "if any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature:" But the apoſtle repreſents meekneſs as a neceſſary branch of *the new man*, and recommends it as ſuch in the text. So that really a man may

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as truly be a genuine Chriſtian without faith in Chriſt, as without prevailing meekneſs.

The neceſſity of it will farther appear from that ſolemn declaration of our Saviour himſelf, Matt. v. 22. "I ſay unto you, that whoſoever is angry with his brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judgment; and whoſoever ſhall ſay to his brother, Raca, ſhall be in danger of the council; but whoſoever ſhall ſay, Thou fool, ſhall be in danger of hell-fire." Our Saviour is here vindicating the ſpiritual nature of the ſixth command, which forbids murder, from the corrupt gloſſes of the Scribes and Phariſees. They taught men to think, that the groſs acts of ſin only made men liable to puniſhment; and ſo particularly, that "whoſoever ſhould kill, ſhould be in danger of the judgment," ver. 21. or that actual murderers only would be puniſhed as breakers of this command. But Chriſt lets his hearers know, that though ſuch only might fall under puniſhment from men, yet there are evils which fall far ſhort of downright murder, by which men will be liable to puniſhment from God, and that in proportion to the degree of their offence. I apprehend that in every inſtance he mentions, he intends the puniſhments of another life: but to expreſs the proportion of puniſhment, anſwerable to the heinouſneſs of the offence, he ſeems to allude to the ſeveral degrees of puniſhment to which the Jews thought offenders liable; common offenders to puniſhment by the ordinary judges which they had in all their cities, called here the judgment; bolder criminals

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to greater ſeverities inflicted by their higher council or Sanhedrim, called here the council; and the moſt hardened and profligate of all the miſeries of another life, called here hell-fire. Now all the offences he mentions, and againſt which he denounces ſevere threatenings, are only ſo many ſteps of unbridled paſſion. "Whoever is angry with his brother without a cauſe," whoever indulges raſh and cauſeleſs anger, will, without repentance, fall under the anger of God. And "whoſoever ſhall ſay to him, Raca," which ſignifies a vain, empty, worthleſs fellow; he who ſuffers his paſſion to carry him on to mock and deride others, ſhall ſtill be more ſeverely puniſhed. "But whoſoever ſhall ſay, Thou fool," which word ſignifies in Scripture, not only a defect of underſtanding, as we commonly mean by it, but a profane, wicked or vile man: ſo that the meaning is, he who ſhall allow his paſſion to tranſport him ſo far, as to revile and ſlander others; to repreſent them as not only fit to be deſpiſed, but even to be abhorred; he ſhall meet with ſtill ſorer puniſhment. You ſee then, that chriſtianity is ſo far from allowing the indulgence of paſſion, that Chriſt here expreſsly declares that it excludes from the kingdom of heaven, and expoſes to the wrath of God.

3. Meekneſs hath particular characters of honour put upon it in the Goſpel. It is a principal ornament, 1 Pet. iii. 4. which makes a perſon's face to ſhine, and his profeſſion to be amiable. And in the ſame place it is declared to be "in the ſight of God of great price,"

price," a temper with which he is highly pleased. And no wonder, since "he that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city," Prov. x. 32. He is the most glorious conqueror, who has obtained a victory over himself. A peculiar blessedness is pronounced upon such. Christ is pleased to single out this virtue for one of his beatitudes, at the beginning of his preaching the Gospel, Matt. v. 5. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." As he proceeded afterwards to declare the necessity of it to our inheriting heaven, ver. 22. as hath been already observed; so he was pleased to begin with a recommendation of it from its subservience to our present comfort, by repeating an antient promise made to it, Psal. xxxvii. 11. that "the meek shall inherit the earth." It has a natural tendency in the ordinary state of the world to promote men's temporal interest, and ease and reputation. While unbridled passions tend to make all about us our enemies; they must be of a very brutal nature indeed, who will be outrageous against a man that studies to walk harmless and blameless, and to give offence to none. The meek at least will be free from those vexations and troubles of life, which hasty forward people bring upon themselves, as the fruits of their own provocations. They have the security of God's providence and promises for so much of the good things of earth, as shall be for their real welfare; and if they meet with unjust and ungrateful returns, they may confidently rely upon God as

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their protector and avenger, who is ready to "riſe to judgment to ſave the meek of the earth," Pſal. lxxvi. 9. And whether they have a larger or leſs ſhare of outward good, yet they are prepared by the maſtery of their paſſions to enjoy more comfort in what they poſſeſs, than thoſe who interrupt their enjoyment by the tumults of their own minds.

4. We have Chriſt's example here to recommend and enforce the exerciſe of meekneſs. This was a bright part of his character. He calls us himſelf to "learn of him, becauſe he was meek and lowly," Math. xi. 29. Not only to receive the rather his inſtructions in general upon this account, as theſe are recommending qualifications of a teacher; but particularly to learn theſe excellencies from him as our pattern in them. Hence St. Paul *beſeeches* Chriſtians *by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt*, as known and conſpicuous branches of his character, 2 Cor. x. 1. And ſo they certainly were.

He had indeed the natural affection of anger in him, and could expreſs it upon proper occaſions. *He looked round about* on his captious enemies *with anger*, Mark iii. 5. He had the affection itſelf, as a proper affection of human nature; without that, he could not have been a proper pattern to us of the due regulation of it: And the regulation, not the extirpation of it, is required of us; that we "be angry, and ſin not." In this he was a perfect pattern to us. But,

He was never angry without a cauſe. We do not find him often angry, but only upon ſome

ſome extraordinary occaſions: Nor was he ever tranſported into indecent paſſion. The hardeſt words he ſpoke were owing to his knowledge of hearts, and to his prophetical character; not to the tranſports of paſſion.

He uſually choſe to turn away wrath, or prevent it by ſoft and gentle anſwers; by mild expoſtulations and calm reaſonings, rather than by ſevere expreſſions. We find inſtances of this upon the moſt injurious charges. When he was charged by ſome of the Scribes with no leſs than blaſpheming, upon his pronouncing pardon to a man ſick of the palſey, Matt. ix. 2, 3. he cooly juſtifies himſelf by appealing to his miraculous power of healing as a proof of his authority to pronounce abſolution to the man. And when in the ſaid chapter, ver. 11. he was reproached by the Phariſees for undue familiarity with publicans and ſinners; he choſe the way of mild reaſoning with them, acquainting them with the peculiar need ſuch people had of his good offices, and the deſign of his coming to ſave miſerable ſinners, ver. 12, 13. When the ſame ſort of people cenſured his diſciples, Matth. xii. for plucking the ears of corn on the ſabbath-day, when they were hungry; he only gives them irrefragable proofs of the lawfulneſs of ſuch a practice in their circumſtances, from allowed examples, from the deſign of the ſabbath, and from his own authority as the Lord of it. And when his enemies, upon one of his eminent miracles, went ſo far as to aſcribe them to a confederacy with the devil; inſtead of rendering railing for railing, he only confutes their

their vile cavil with the greateſt ſtrength and force of reaſoning, and annexes to it a neceſſary warning againſt their perſiſting in obſtinacy; Mat. xii. 24, &c. When ſome of his hearers were ſo enraged as to attempt to ſtone him; yet he reaſons with them with the utmoſt calmneſs and compoſure: "Many good works have I ſhewed from my Father; for which of thoſe works do ye ſtone me?" John x. 31, 32. Could any thing be at once more gentle and convictive? He treated even Judas himſelf, notwithſtanding all the aggravating circumſtances of his crime, with unuſual ſoftneſs of ſpeech: As one Evangeliſt repreſents it. "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Matt. xxvi. 50. Or, according to another, "Judas, betrayeſt thou the Son of Man with a kiſs?" Luke xxii. 48. Which is no more than an appeal to his own conſcience. Theſe inſtances ſhew us, that meekneſs and returns gentle in the manner of them, but ſtrong in the matter and to the purpoſe, are ordinarily the beſt ways of dealing with ill-minded adverſaries.

At other times we find Chriſt perfectly ſilent, when he could have no hope of doing good by ſpeaking. So he behaved, when the two falſe witneſſes appeared againſt him, Matt. xxvi. 62, 63. His adverſaries were reſolved and fixed in their determinations againſt him; and he could have no proſpect of bringing them to a better mind, by debating the matter with them, and then he choſe to ſay nothing. Though "oppreſſed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was

brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before his ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his mouth," Iſa. liii. 7.

And upon the greateſt provocations he was moſt remote from a revengeful temper. As he would not countenance his diſciples, but reproved them for pretending to call for fire from heaven againſt the Samaritans, upon their ill uſage of him and his followers; ſo he maintained a good-will to his outrageous enemies: "Father," ſays he on the croſs, "forgive them, for they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34. "Forgive them;" that is what I wiſh for them: "They know not what they do;" that is the beſt apology I can make for them. Herein he teaches us meekneſs and gentleneſs under the worſt uſage.

By way of reflection then,

1. Be perſuaded to "ſeek meekneſs," Zep. ii. 3. Propoſe it to yourſelves as a matter of neceſſity, that meekneſs ſhould ordinarily have dominion over paſſion. And carry the conqueſt as far as you can.

To this end, it will be of great moment, that a careful guard be kept upon our hearts, and that the beginnings of anger there be obſerved. It will be much eaſier to extinguiſh it in the firſt ſparks, than when it has flamed out. Fixing it as a law to ourſelves, that we will make a ſhort pauſe, upon the firſt riſe of a reſentment, would ſtifle moſt paſſions in the birth.

All prudent precautions ſhould be taken, in reference to the ordinary ſources and occaſions

ſions of paſſion, and I may venture to ſay, that lowering our inordinate eſteem of two things, of ourſelves, and of this world and its affairs, would go a great way in removing the fuel of paſſion. For external occaſions, as far as we can foreſee them likely to provoke, we ſhould carefully avoid coming in the way of them, farther than neceſſary duty obliges: If we cannot avoid the occaſion, we have reaſon to double our guard, when we are aware of the danger.

To think often of our own frailty and liableneſs to offend, how many indiſcretions and weakneſſes at leaſt, others have to bear with in us, would be an habitual preſervative againſt haſtineſs with them. It would cheriſh in us "the ſpirit of meekneſs, to conſider ourſelves, leſt we alſo be tempted," Gal. vi. 1.

The indecencies and ill effects of paſſion ſhould often be called to remembrance. Every man is ſenſible when he ſees another in a tranſport, that he is in a fit of madneſs: Now we ſhould ſee our own face in that glaſs. What miſchiefs has paſſion produced in the world? I may rather ſay, what has it not produced? How much ſin does it occaſion in others, as well as in the tranſported man himſelf? What ſhame and ſorrow have our own paſt follies coſt us in our cooler hours? Theſe things ſhould be laid up as guards againſt new temptations.

But along with all, let us often ſeek meekneſs of God by prayer. Let us pray for the Spirit, one of whoſe fruits it is.

2. See that your meekneſs be indeed a chriſtian

christian grace. Some by a turn of natural temper find it easier to restrain passion, than others. And certainly they have reason to be thankful to God for that advantage in their constitution; and the extravagances of passion would be the more criminal in them upon that account. But as far as it is mere good nature, and not performed out of a sense of duty to God, it is not a christian grace. To make it so, it must be animated by christian principles, and exercised by the direction of the christian rule.

Those who by their natural make have a stronger proneness than others to be warm and eager, or to be peevish and morose; should yet remember, that that will not release them from obligation to the grace and duty of meekness. If it be more difficult for them to govern their passions, and behave as becomes the Gospel; yet this is absolutely necessary by the christian institution, and there is no help for it, but they must take the more pains with their own hearts, watch more their own spirits, and be the more earnest in prayer to God. They are not incurable by the heavenly physician: And they will have one advantage upon a conquest, above those of milder natural tempers, that it will be more evident that their meekness is really from religion.

3. Let us not lay much stress upon an excuse commonly made for other faults, that they were done in a passion. When such evil consequences might be foreseen, at least as possible, they should rather have fortified us

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againſt the admiſſion of paſſion, than paſſion be made uſe of afterwards as a plea for them. A true Chriſtian will rather conſider thoſe evil effects of his paſſion, as aggravations of the ſinfulneſs of it, and therefore be more watchful for the future, and diligent to grow in meekneſs: which will be a growing preparation for the heavenly world, where neither pride nor paſſion have any place, but all is calm and ſerene, peaceful and happy.

SERMON XI.

PEACEABLENESS.

ROM. xii. 18.

If it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

THE ſeveral expreſſions and exerciſes of a peaceable diſpoſition belong to other graces and virtues, or naturally flow from them; yet as they are all directed to this ſpecial end, the promoting of peace, we may conſider them as making, in a ſort, a particular excellence or branch of the chriſtian temper. I have choſen this paſſage of the apoſtle to repreſent and recommend a peaceable ſpirit, becauſe it is eſpecially expreſſive and emphatical.

And there will be occasion, I. To shew the general import of the exhortation. II. What is implied in the qualifications added; "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you." III. The extent prescribed for our aim and endeavour in this matter; "with all men." Under which, the particular duties incumbent upon us for this purpose will naturally come to be considered. And, IV. The importance of a peaceable spirit in christianity.

I. The general import of the exhortation to "live peaceably," may be reduced to two particulars.

1. That we should have a hearty love and value for peace as far as it may be obtained. Considered as a Christian grace, it must begin in the temper. Heathen morality taught no more to be necessary than the performance of commendable actions; or when their moralists directed to look deeper, to an inward disposition and principle, it was principally as that might forward and facilitate the outward practice. But in christianity, the principle and temper have the main stress laid upon them in order to acceptance with God: that "whatever we do we do it to the Lord, and not to men." So the peaceableness of the spirit is of main account with God. To bear a hostile mind to our neighbour, is highly offensive to God, though it should not break out into act. And in order to his acceptance, this inward disposition to peace must arise from religious principles. It must not be the mere result of a more quiet and easy natural temper; but flow form a regard to God's author-

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ity, enjoining it as a neceſſary duty by the voice of nature and Scripture, and from a ſincere love to men thereupon.

2. That we ſtudiouſly direct our conduct ſo as may be moſt likely to teach this end: or, "follow peace with all men," Heb. xii. 14. That we gladly embrace all becoming methods for cultivating amity, and as carefully avoid every thing which tends to break the peace. It is a vain thing to pretend we are lovers of peace, if it plainly appears in our conduct that we are litigious and provoking, pettiſh and exceptious, ever ſtiff and unyielding in our demands; or in other reſpects take the ways which make, or keep open, or inflame differences.

II. I proceed to ſhew what is implied in the qualifications added; "if it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you."

1. It is evidently intimated, that it is not always poſſible, or in our power, to reach the deſirable end of peace. Thoſe who conſcientiouſly and in earneſt "ſeek peace and purſue it," according to the exhortation, Pſal. xxxvi 14. yet ſometimes find that it flies from them as faſt as they can purſue it.

Sometimes this falls out in common life, through the perverſe humours and unreaſonable obſtinacy of thoſe with whom we have to do. There are people in the world ſo captious as to take exception and offence without any foundation; who can catch at the moſt innocent occaſions to work up their minds to reſentment: and ſo inveterate that they will not give up a prejudice once entertained,

tained, upon the beſt reaſons offered, or the moſt condeſcending ſteps taken to ſatisfy them. They are not to be gained by kindneſs, but it rather makes them more inſolent: the more they diſcern that you ſeek peace, they will be at the greater diſtance from it: every conceſſion emboldens their animoſity; and there is no peace to be had, but by ceaſing to have any thing to do with them, or by juſt puniſhment. The generality, it is to be hoped, are not ſo abandoned; but whoever converſes any time in the world, will hardly fail to meet with ſome ſuch ill-turned minds. The Pſalmiſt had occaſion to complain of ſuch in his time, and it was a very uncomfortable circumſtance of his life, Pſal. cxx. 5, 6, 7. "Woe is me, that I ſojourn in Meſech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar. My ſoul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace; but when I ſpeak, they are for war."

Sometimes it is not morally poſſible, or in our power, to be at peace with men; becauſe they will not be at peace with us, unleſs we will violate a good conſcience. We only can do, what we may do lawfully. *Id poſſumus, quod jure poſſumus.* Men may be diſpleaſed for that wherein we act moſt conſcientiouſly toward God: This we cannot help; for we muſt not ſacrifice conſcience in any inſtance to peace, though all the world ſhould be angry with us. Peace, though ſo deſirable a bleſſing, is not to be purchaſed at any rate; but only purſued as far as conſiſts with ſuperior obligations, as far as we are left at liberty to ſeek it without violating our duty. For inſtance, Neither

Neither truth nor holineſs are to be ſacrificed to peace. That would be to ſacrifice our peace with God and with our own conſciences, for the ſake of peace with men; which for certain would be much too dear a bargain. We are required to "love the truth and peace," Zech. viii. 19. Truth firſt, and peace only in conſiſtence with the other. We are to "buy the truth and not ſell it" upon any terms, Prov. xxiii. 23. A regard to peace may juſtify us in keeping ſome of our ſentiments to ourſelves, which are of leſs importance; but never in denying the leaſt truth. And ſo we are to "follow peace with all men," but in conjunction with "holineſs," Heb. xii. 14. For the "wiſdom which is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable," Jam. iii. 17. Truth and holineſs then are undoubtedly preferable to peace; and if we cannot procure the favour of others without "making ſhipwreck of faith or of a good conſcience," we muſt be content without it. It ſhould be eſteemed by us impoſſible, what lies not in us, to profeſs any thing contrary to what we think the doctrine of Chriſt, or to practiſe any thing contrary to what we judge the law of Chriſt, even in the leaſt inſtance, to gratify the whole world.

Nor ſhould we decline any ſervice we are capable of, to the intereſt of Chriſt or of our country, for fear of ſome peoples offence. Chriſtian courage and fortitude ſhould extinguiſh ſuch fears. To *contend earneſtly for* that which we apprehend to be *the faith once delivered to the ſaints*, when it is oppoſed, will never

er be conſtrued by God or equitable men for the mark of an unpeaceable ſpirit; as long as we do it only by fair reaſon and argument, without injurious repreſentations of the ſenſe of thoſe we oppoſe, or uncharitable reflections upon them; in a word, if we intermix not paſſion or injuſtice with our zeal. Nor is it a defect of any thing becoming us in order to peace, if we will not ſacrifice the liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made us free, by complying with impoſitions in religion, which have no more than human authority.

We may diſpleaſe ſome, and occaſion their being our enemies, by making head againſt their vices and immoralities, and by bringing them to deſerved puniſhment for the miſchief they do to the community: They may call thoſe the troublers of our Iſrael, and diſturbers of the peace, who will not ſuffer them to proceed with impunity in open profaneneſs and ſenſuality, but contribute their utmoſt to the execution of the laws for reformation of manners; but they may as well impute unpeaceableneſs to them, who endeavour to detect the thief or the cheat, or any other public nuiſance. Attempts againſt open licentiouſneſs in morals, are as truly conducive to the public tranquillity and welfare, as any other proſecution of crimes againſt the ſociety. Here peace with particular perſons ſhould be out of the queſtion with a Chriſtian who acts under ſuperior obligations to God and his country.

Where peace then cannot be maintained in full harmony with truth and duty, it ſhould be

be esteemed, by a man devoted to God, an impossibility. But,

2. This addition greatly enforces the precept, when it may consist with higher obligations. We must not venture every thing for peace, nothing which is more valuable than itself; but we should esteem it worth a great deal of pains and self-denial. If we can compass it by any means that are fit for us to use, we should endeavour it, and though past endeavours should have failed of success, yet still attempt to reach so valuable an end, as long as any hope of success remains.

3. It is implied farther, that we shall have reason to be content and easy, though we should miss of our aim, if we have performed our part. Do but what lieth in you, and no more can reasonably be expected: then the breach of peace may be your affliction, but it will not be your sin. You may entertain comfortable reflections in your own breast, and hope for divine acceptance and reward. You may cast your cares upon God for protection against the designs and ill offices of the unpeaceable, or for supports under the trial of their ill-will; or hope that possibly in time they may be recovered to a better mind; That "when your ways please the Lord, he will make your enemies to be at peace with you;" Prov. xvi. 7.

III. The extent prescribed for our aim in this matter, is to be considered. Live peaceably "with all men." There is a civil peace and concord to be cultivated with all men at large; and there is a more peculiar peace and harmony

harmony which we ſhould endeavour to maintain with our fellow-Chriſtians as ſuch. Theſe are of diſtinct conſideration.

1. We ſhould endeavour to live peaceably *with all men* at large, as far as we have any concern with them. Set aſide the conſideration of their religion or their virtuous character, we are obliged by the dictates of nature and of Chriſtianity too, to ſtudy peace with them as our fellow-creatures. And to this end,

(1.) We ſhould be careful to behave inoffenſively to all: To "give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God," 1 Cor. x. 32. that if poſſible, we may prevent any difference from ariſing.

No man ſhould be treated with inſolence and rudeneſs, with injurious or reflecting words, with outrageous and indecent paſſions, which every man knows to be directly provoking. A peaceable man is not ordinarily *a wrathful man*, becauſe ſuch a one *ſtirreth up ſtrife*, Prov. xv. 18. Nor *a froward man*, for the ſame reaſon, for *he ſoweth ſtrife*, chap. xvi. 28. Nor *a ſcorner*, for he gives riſe to *contention, ſtrife, and reproach*, chap. xxii. 10. He will not behave with haughtineſs, but with humility and meekneſs. If we are for peace, we ſhall be ſo far from allowing ourſelves to do our neighbour a real injury, that we ſhall endeavour to conciliate and ſecure his affection by any offices of humanity and friendſhip within our power.

A lover of peace will obſerve the tempers of

of others; and when he knows them to be peculiarly tender, and apt to take exception, inſtead of reckoning it a pleaſure to put them out of humour, he will rather reſtrain himſelf from ſuch innocent freedoms with them, as he might uſe to others without the leaſt offence.

We ſhould not intermeddle unneceſſarily in the affairs of others, or act the buſy-body, which is mentioned in Scripture as a very ill character, and is known by a frequent incendiary. We ſhould not pry into the ſecret concerns of other people, that do not concern us, the affairs of families, or the behaviour of relations one to another: Much leſs ſhould we divulge what we hear to the diſadvantage of our neighbour, any farther than the honour of God, or the intereſt of ſome other perſons make it neceſſary. There are a ſet of miſcreants, who often bring themſelves into the briars, and break the peace of neighbourhoods, and families, and friends, by making it their buſineſs to pick up ill ſtories of others, to ſpread them again in converſation: either merely that they may furniſh themſelves with matter of talk; or for a worſe reaſon, that they may gratify their own vile inclination to detraction and backbiting. Some are thus employed out of idleneſs. "We hear," ſays the apoſtle, "that there are ſome which walk among you diſorderly, working not at all, but are buſy-bodies," 2 Theſ. iii. 11. and 1 Tim. v. 13. "They learn to be idle, wandering about from houſe to houſe; and not only idle, but tattlers alſo, and buſy-bodies, ſpeaking

things which they ought not." These are pestilent make-bates in civil and religious societies. *A tale-bearer revealeth secrets; and* therefore *where he is not the strife ceaseth*, Prov. xxvi. 20. But those who *study to be quiet* will *mind their own business*, 1 Thes. iv. 11. And if people would agree to do this more, and mind the affairs of others less, it would go a great way to maintain the peace of the world.

Another thing necessary to prevent offence and secure peace, is, that we are careful to give all in their several stations the regard and respect due to them. As justice requires this, so it is the way to peace. That we pay a quiet submission to lawful authority, and give not into noisy complaints and murmurings against those in power, upon every step in the administration which seems doubtful to us. And surely a little modesty would teach us to be very tender in judging of things much above us. If we make conscience of "rendering to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour," as is our unquestionable duty, Rom. xiii. 7. so we cannot but apprehend how much it would contribute to peace.

(2.) We are equally concerned in order to peace, not to be quick in taking offence. Possibly as many quarrels in the world owe their rise to a temper unduly exceptious in some, as to a provoking humour in others: that is, they proceed from offence taken without ground or real design. They are founded upon

on misunderstandings, and wrong interpretations of words or actions; and that is esteemed a great and heinous provocation, which a small share of humility and charity would have passed over in silence, or soon forgot. A man of a peaceable spirit will put the best construction upon things doubtful; and suspend sharp resentment till facts are ascertained: he will not admit prejudices upon uncertain hearsays; but examine the truth of them, before they make impression. If some reckon it a point of honour to be quick at resenting a provocation, I am sure it is the reverse of christianity; and can neither be for the service of the world at present, nor contribute to a comfortable account at last. That which was observed upon meekness, is equally true of a sincere love to peace, that it will restrain from deep resentment of small injuries, though they should be real; and from such passionate expressions of displeasure thereupon, as serve to no other purpose but to inflame a difference. Many people might soon have received proper satisfaction for an injury done them, if they had not themselves over-rated it, and carried their resentment beyond all regular bounds, till they made a small breach wide and most difficult to be healed.

(3.) We should be desirous to regain peace as soon as possible, whenever a difference actually arises. The implacable are reckoned among the greatest sinners, Rom. i. 31.

If we have given offence by any hasty or imprudent action, a love to peace will push

us

us on to set matters right; to explain our conduct, if it hath been mistaken; or chearfully to acknowledge our fault, if we have done amiss. So Christ teaches us, Matth. v. 23, 24. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembereſt that thy brother hath aught againſt thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, firſt be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

On the other hand, if we have received a ſmall injury, we ſhould be eaſily ſatisfied with our neighbour's acknowledgement. Chriſt, knowing the proneneſs of men to be too obſtinate in their reſentments, prefaces a command to the contrary with a ſolemn caution, Luke xvii. 3, 4. "Take heed to yourſelves," watch your own ſpirits, that you may the more eaſily comply with what I am about to ſay: and that is, "If thy brother treſpaſs againſt thee, rebuke him: and if he repent, forgive him. And if he treſpaſs againſt thee ſeven times in a day, and ſeven times in a day turn again to thee, ſaying I repent, thou ſhalt forgive him."

Or though a perſon who has offended us, ſhould not according to his duty make the firſt overture for reconciliation; yet if there be any hope of ſucceeding by our taking the firſt ſteps, ſurely we ſhould not ſtand upon forms to obtain ſo great a bleſſing as peace.

Yea, we ſhould be willing to ſacrifice little things, and to recede from our ſtrict rights in ſome caſes, rather than perpetuate a quarrel.

This

This I take to be one part of our Saviour's meaning in Matt. v. 39, 40, 41. "Whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other alſo. And if any man will ſue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo. And whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Not that our Saviour requires us patiently to put up every injury done us. In ſome caſes that would be a prejudice to the community, an encouragement to injurious men, and a wrong to our families. But I apprehend that two things were eſpecially in our Lord's intention. One is, that in the beginning of chriſtianity, when there were none but heathen and jewiſh judges, he would have his diſciples, for the credit of chriſtianity, not to appear litigious by appealing to their courts upon ſlight occaſions. And the other is, that for ſmaller injuries; either in their reputation, ſuch as ſmiting on the cheek, which was a mark of contempt; or in their property, as the taking away of a coat; or in their liberty, as compelling them to go a mile out of their way: they ſhould rather paſs them over for the ſake of peace, if they could have reaſonable hopes that ſuch ſoft treatment would make a good impreſſion on them. Certainly thoſe who are reſolved to give up nothing of their ſtrict rights for the ſake of peace, are not hearty lovers of it. Abraham's example in reſpect of Lot was truly commendable, when no great damage could enſue upon his yielding to him. When their herdſmen differed, Abraham, inſtead of ſaying, I

have as much right as you to this country, or I have a ſuperior right, as I am the elder, and your uncle, chuſes to ſay, Gen. xiii. 8, 9. "Let there be no ſtrife, I pray thee between me and thee; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou wilt depart to the right hand, then will I go to the left." Prudence indeed muſt direct how far this may ſafely be done in particular caſes; but a ſtrong love to peace will certainly diſpoſe to ſubmit to ſome inconveniences to obtain it.

2. We ſhould endeavour to cultivate a more peculiar peace and harmony with all our fellow Chriſtians, as ſuch. Over and above that, which we are directed to maintain, as far as in us lies, with all men in common, the Goſpel preſcribes ſomething ſpecial in this matter with reference to the viſible ſubjects of Chriſt's kingdom, and members of his body, Mark ix. 50. "Have peace one with another." Rom. xiv. 19. "Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." 1 Cor. xiv. 33. "God is the author, not of confuſion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the ſaints." Eph. iv. 3. "Keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." 1 Theſſ. v. 13. "Be at peace with yourſelves," 1 Cor. xiii. 11. "Be of one mind, live in peace."

Such paſſages as theſe are plainly deſigned not only to enjoin Chriſtians to live peaceably together in the ſame ſenſe as they are obliged to do ſo with all men, in the common offices

of

of life; though for certain that is included, and with peculiar bonds to do so as we are fellow-christians: But also to have a peaceable spirit toward one another, especially in matters of religion.

It must be owned indeed with grief and shame, that in fact there have never been greater, more outrageous, more lasting and inveterate dissentions in the world, than among those called Christians, and upon the score of their religious differences. Much blood hath been spilled in these quarrels. And where contests have not been carried to that length, yet nothing is more apparent, than that the most inflexible animosities and distances from age to age have been among those who have in common worn the christian name. With respect to this event of things, though not the tendency of his doctrine, Christ foretold, that "he was not come to send peace upon earth, but a sword," Matth. x. 34. That is, the various lusts and irregular inclinations of men, would so abuse his doctrine, that it would too often be made the occasion of violent contentions. But as to the proper design and natural tendency of his coming, the angels proclaimed at his appearance in flesh, that it was to send "peace upon earth," Luke ii. 14. And so the precepts delivered by himself and his apostles plainly declare.

And the way of peace among Christians, seems to be as plainly declared in the gospel, if we are but in a disposition to attend to it, as the way to peace between man and man in common.

Not

Not by pretending to bring all Christians to a perfect uniformity of sentiments or practices in matters of religion. That was not in the apostolical days themselves: nor can be hoped for till we come to heaven.

Nor by arbitrary forms of agreement devised by men, and prescribed by some to others. There was more of the unity of the spirit preserved in the bond of peace during the primitive times, before ever such methods were invented, than since the christian world has abounded with them. And if they had been thought necessary, certainly he that was faithful in all God's house, would either in person, or by his apostles, have recommended them to the use of the church.

But we are directed to look upon all as our fellow-christians, "who call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours," 1 Cor. i. 2. Who profess "one body, one spirit, one hope of their calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," Eph. iv. 4—6. Nor can it be thought, that every difference of sentiment about every one of these particulars, nulls mens christianity. One would think, that now when the canon of Scripture is completed, we should be ready to own all them our fellow-christians, who own the same sacred books as we do for the only and perfect rule of christian faith and practice. Though they and we should differ in understanding many particulars contained in that rule; yet if we judge them "weak in the faith," we are directed to "receive them, but not to doubtful disputations," Rom. xv. 1.

What

What peace would it soon produce in the christian world, if hereupon such plain Gospel-rules as these were observed, among the several contending parties of Christians? "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, to forbear one another in love," Eph. iv. 2. "Not to judge our brother, or set at nought our brother," Rom. xiv. 10. "but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way," ver. 13. How happily would the face of the christian church be altered, if all the members of it on all hands would make it a law to themselves, charitably to think others as sincere in their searches after truth, as we profess to be in ours, though they cannot see with our eyes? To avoid censuring others for differing from us, as we should complain of their censuring us where we think we are in the right? To remember, that they have a right to judge for themselves, as well as we; and that we are no more infallible than they; and hereupon to treat one another with brotherly love notwithstanding our different persuasions?

These things, accompanied with a care to manage disputes in religion, when they fall out, with temper and moderation, to "give a reason of our hope" and persuasion "with meekness and fear;" and with a readiness to allow others to give a reason of their persuasions without taking offence at it, as we expect the like ourselves: These things, I say, would go farthest to heal the breaches of the church; and I doubt they will hardly be healed in this world by any other way.

IV. We

IV. We are yet to consider the importance of a peaceable spirit in christianity.

It has been already shewn to be frequently and strongly inculcated by way of precept, and therefore should be diligently attended to by all that call Christ Lord; for "why call ye him, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he says?" And it is many other ways recommended in the Gospel: As,

1. By shewing us the great evil of an unpeaceable spirit. It is the fruit of carnality, or of an undue ascendant which some fleshly motive has over us, 1 Cor. iii. 3. "Ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?" And therefore "variance, emulations, wrath, strife," are reckoned up among "the works of the flesh," Gal. v. 20. And as a turbulent quarrelsome spirit hath a bad source, so it produces very ill effects, Jam. iii. 16. "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work." When a quarrel is begun, however innocently at first on one side, yet it scarce ever happens in the progress of contention, but there come to be faults on both sides: Evil surmises, undue animosities, mutual reflections, indecent sallies of passion; it may be usefulness on all hands obstructed, and scandals multiplied, and the name of God and their holy vocation blasphemed, when quarrels rise to a height among those who pretend to religion. Who can reckon up the many sins, and the many occasions of dishonour to God, which have their rise sometimes from a single and a small quarrel?

rel? And how few, when they reflect upon their own frames and actions, can remember a contest they have been engaged in, wherein they could altogether acquit themselves from blame through the whole procedure? Besides the sins of others, which they may have seen upon such occasions, have they not found their own spirits disturbed, their frames disordered in religious exercises, and that too often they have spoke unadvisedly with their lips? So justly does Solomon give that elegant representation, Prov. xvii. 14. "The beginning of strife is, as when one letteth out water:" If you take away the dams that keep in an impetuous torrent, you cannot foresee all the mischiefs it may produce; so it is when a quarrel is begun: "Therefore," if possible, as it follows, "leave off contentions before it be meddled with."

2. By representing a peaceable disposition in a very advantageous light. It is one of *the fruits of the* blessed *Spirit*, where he is pleased to take up his gracious residence, Gal, v. 22. it is mentioned as one principal thing wherein *the* spiritual *kingdom of God*, or true religion in the hearts of men, consists, Rom. xiv. 17. Christ saw fit to make it the subject of one of his beatitudes, Matth. v. 9. "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God." They, who make it their business to promote the peace and welfare of mankind, and to settle those about them in general quiet and love, as far as it is in their power: Such men, resembling God in those attributes of his in which he so much

glories,

glories, his goodneſs and love, ſhall be owned and received by him as eminently his children. The calm and compoſed ſoul, that is breathing love and peace, is in the beſt preparation to receive divine influences and favours; and accordingly they are peculiarly promiſed in ſuch a frame, 2 Cor. xiii. 11.——"Live in peace; and the God of love and peace ſhall be with you."

3. By the lively expreſſions of ſuch a temper in the example of Chriſt. He was on the one hand, a pattern for obſerving the proper limitations to be attended to in all purſuits after peace: He ever preferred truth and duty to it, an obedience to his Father to the pleaſing of men; and ſo muſt we. But on the other hand, as far it as was conſiſtent with his higher engagements, he ever ſhewed a ſtrong diſpoſition for peace. Inſtead of offering injury to any, he made it his buſineſs to do good to all. He acted correſpondent to the antient prophecy of him, that he "ſhould not ſtrive nor cry, neither ſhould any man hear his voice in the ſtreets," Matt. xii. 19. He purſued his work without noiſe and contention, without tumult and diſturbance. And he diſcountenanced the beginning of a ſtrife among his followers, Luke xxii. 24, 25. Rather than he would offend the civil government, he paid tribute, though it was not due from him, as he declares, Matt. xvii. 27. And rather than he would offend the Jewiſh prieſts, when he had miraculouſly cured a leper, he ordered him to go to the prieſt, and carry him the gift preſcribed by the law for the

the priests, when they were concerned in the cure of a leprosy, Matth viii. iv. Our master came both preaching peace, and exemplifying our proper behaviour in order to it.

4. By the account it gives us of the heavenly world; as a state of perfect love and harmony, where there are no jarring notes and affections. When a good man dies, he "enters into peace," Isaiah lvii. 2. Here possibly he had frequent occasion to lament the unsuccessfulness of his endeavours to obtain peace, and to mourn over the many bleeding wounds of the church of Christ. But this is one circumstance, which makes heaven a delightful prospect, that he shall meet with an equal disposition to peace in all the other inhabitants; that unity of the christian church will then be completed; and that all his own distempers, which make him not so peaceable now as he should be, shall be fully cured. Now surely this prospect should excite our zeal to grow in such a temper now, as an eminent meetness for that world, and a similitude of temper to what prevails in it.

By way of reflection then,

1. This may be sufficient to vindicate christianity from the reproaches which have been cast upon it for the divisions and animosities that have abounded among Christians. The precepts, the pattern, the principles of christianity, all lead another way; they directly lead to peaceableness. If it be asked then, "Whence comes wars and fightings?" This question must be answered now,

as it was by the apoſtle James in the primitive times, James iv. 1. "Come they not hence, of your luſts that war in your members?" Pride, and ambition, and paſſion, too often prevail and reign among many that wear the chriſtian name: and there are too ſtrong remains of theſe and other diſorderly affections in the beſt.

2. This may be a proper ſubject of trial and ſelf-examination. If we make no conſcience of this duty of peaceableneſs, we have not yet entered into the ſpirit of true chriſtianity. And it will be one way to diſcern at leaſt, whether vital religion is advancing or declining in us, by examining whether we are of a more peaceable or a more turbulent temper than we were formerly.

3. Let us all, as we are exhorted in the text, cultivate and exerciſe a peaceable and healing diſpoſition. This is the likelieſt way to diſpoſe others to be at peace with us. The reaſon of the thing, the promiſe of God, and the ordinary courſe of experience, ſhew this; and every man deſires that others may be at peace with him, even ſuch as contribute leaſt towards it themſelves. This will at leaſt be an effectual means to ſecure peace in our own breaſt, under other peoples undeſerved unkindneſs and ill uſage, if they have nothing againſt us except in the matters of our God. It will greatly credit our profeſſion, and capacitate for the more extenſive uſefulneſs. And it will be one thing to ſoften a death-bed.

Therefore

Therefore pray for the Spirit of grace to make it a ſettled habitual principle with you. Often meditate on the bleſſings which enſue from peace to ſoul and body. Cultivate the grace of humility, the want of which lies at the bottom of moſt contentions. Watch againſt every thing which you find by experience to have a tendency to ſour your ſpirits. And whatever difficulty you may find in ruling your own ſpirits for this purpoſe, or in bearing with the peeviſhneſs of others; remember that this, and all the other parts of your warfare, will ſoon be over; and the prize you have in view, to be recognized hereafter as the children of God, will abundantly overbalance all your difficulties.

SERMON XII.

A merciful Temper.

COLOSS. iii. 12. the former part.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies.———

I HAVE choſen more than once already, in the courſe of my deſign, to make this verſe my ſubject, for ſome branches of the chriſtian temper mentioned in it; becauſe it recommends the ſeveral particulars which

it

it enumerates in the moſt advantageous light, as parts of the new man, wherein vital chriſtianity conſiſts; or as chriſtian graces, which thoſe who profeſs chriſtianity, are eſpecially obliged to cultivate. As ſuch, we are called to "put on bowels of mercies," or a diſpoſition to ſhew mercy to the proper objects of it.

And here, as on ſeveral other heads, I ſhall I. Explain the diſpoſition required. And, II. Shew the peculiar engagements that lie upon Chriſtians to it.

I. The nature of the diſpoſition required, expreſſed by "bowels of mercies."

It may be thus deſcribed in general: It is a diſpoſition of mind, whereby we are inclined tenderly to ſympathize with others in their evils or dangers; and are ready to help and relieve them, as far as it is in our power.

The peculiar occaſion for this grace is given by the miſery of other people; either preſent diſtreſſes they are labouring under, or ſome evils to which we may diſcern them to be expoſed. As there would have been no room for divine mercy, if miſery had not made its entrance among creatures either in actual feeling or in title; ſo without this there could be no place for the mercy of one man to another.

And as in other graces, ſo in this, we are principally to conſider the temper of the mind. We are called to put on "bowels of mercy:" A tender, ſympathiſing ſpirit, apt to have a quick ſenſe of other peoples calamities.

ities and dangers, and to be nearly touched with them; and from that inward charitable frame, to do them all proper good offices. Actions which carry the greatest appearance of compassion and mercy, if in truth they proceed not from such a temper of soul, will not meet with divine acceptance. And the apostle intimates, that there may be such actions without a right principle, when he tells us, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity it profiteth me nothing." This is one of the strongest evidences whereby one man can proceed in his judgment of another, that he is of a merciful disposition, when he is content to give all that he hath to relieve another man's necessity: and yet the apostle intimates that such a diffusion of visible charity may proceed from an ill spring; as, suppose from ostentation, from a hope to compound with God by this means for other sins; from something beside a genuine sympathy with our neighbour. If this should be the case, the most pompous acts of beneficence would profit us nothing at the bar of Christ.

On the other hand, men may be esteemed by God really to possess the bowels of mercy which christianity requires, though they are not in a capacity to give any bright proofs of it to men by sensible instances. A poor man may have the grace of a merciful disposition as truly as the richest, if he really sympathises with his neighbour, and would do more if he had it in his power. For "if

there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not," 2 Cor. viii. 12. The temper of the mind then is first to be regarded.

But if there be such a disposition, it will not fail to express itself in merciful actions, in proportion to capacity and opportunity. The man who can allow himself to act a barbarous and cruel part, or who ordinarily declines to act as bowels of mercy would lead him to do, certainly is not possessed of them. The christian scheme is so spiritual, as not to admit the acts of mercy for virtue, without the disposition: But it is so just and consistent, as not to leave room for a pretence to the disposition, when the life and actions proclaim the contrary.

Now a compassionate and merciful temper to our neighbour, may be considered as leading to be affected and to act differently, according to several particular views we may take of the case of others. That is, in reference to their souls and their spiritual miseries and dangers: or in reference to their outward afflictions and sufferings, wherein we have no immediate concern of our own: or, lastly, in relation to any particular injuries they have done to ourselves, by means of which they may lie at our mercy. By this way of considering mercy, the nature of it will, as I apprehend, be most plainly and practically explained.

1. It is to be exercised in reference to the souls of men, and their spiritual miseries and dangers.

dangers. Here a Christian has abundant reason for bowels of mercy and compassion to his fellow-creatures, much more than he can have from any outward calamities that may befal them.

The sins of men, and their danger of their everlasting ruin by them, will awaken a lively concern and grief in the merciful mind of a Christian. He has the truest and justest compassion for his neighbour, who cannot without a tender sorrow see him provoking the great God to jealousy, throwing away his immortal soul, living under the full power of a mortal distemper, and laying up in store for a dreadful account. Whoever believes a reality in religion, must be much more affected with such a melancholy sight, than with seeing the bodily wants or consuming diseases of men, or with hearing their most dismal groans and mournful complaints upon any worldly account; because he knows that the danger of their souls is infinitely greater. Such was the temper of the holy Psalmist, Psal. cxix. 158. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because they kept not thy law." He was grieved for the dishonour to God, that was piety, and for the risque they run of their own ruin, that was charity and compassion to them.

But if this inward concern be sincere and genuine, it will shew itself in all proper endeavours, according to our ability and opportunity, to save them from sin and ruin. If we truly pity the ignorance of others, we shall be ready to instruct them, if we are able to do

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it, and they are willing to receive it; or take pleasure in supporting others in such a work, who are more capable of helping them. If we are deeply affected with their danger, we shall gladly embrace any opportunity to give them faithful warning, and to "pull them out of the fire," if we can, Jude 23. Where our own influence cannot reach, we shall rejoice if by any means within our power we can engage others in so beneficial a design, who may be more capable and likely to succeed. This compassion for the souls of men, would give life to any project for supporting and propagating the Gospel, either by our immediate influence, or by our purses, or by any other way we can come at: It would make us immediate actors, or fond of bearing any part in any reforming design set on foot. And if we can have no farther influence, we should help all such designs by frequent and fervent prayer for the propagation of the Gospel to the darkest and most distant corners of the earth, that it may "have free course and be glorified:" For our worst enemies, that they may be recovered to repentance: And even for such, of whose recovery we may have but very low hopes at present. Oh that there were more such merciful men to the souls of their fellow-creatures! That more were inspired with this persuasion, that "if a man err, and one convert him, he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins;" Jam. v. 19, 20.

2. It is to be exercised in relation to the outward

outward afflictions and ſufferings of others, even where we may hope no immediate concern. Any of the calamities and evils of life, to which men are liable, give opportunity for bowels of mercy: Their pains and diſeaſes of body; their troubles and perplexities of mind; their neceſſitous circumſtances of life, either in their ordinary courſe, or as reduced to them by diſaſters and diſappointments; their unjuſt ſuffering from other men, either for conſciences, or by common oppreſſion and injuſtice; and even the ſufferings and miſeries which men bring upon themſelves by their own fault and folly: A merciful man will not think himſelf altogether unconcerned in any of theſe; though ſome of them, and in ſome caſes, and with ſome particular views, may juſtly touch him more tenderly than others.

Here, as in the former caſe of the ſouls of others, mercifulneſs begins in the frame and temper of the mind. There ſhould be an affecting ſenſe of the diſtreſſes of others, a ſympathy with them, and a charitable good-will to them. He, who is wrapped up in himſelf, and regards not what calamities befal other people, as long as his own circumſtances remain eaſy, is not human, much leſs acts like a Chriſtian. Chriſtianity teaches us to "look not only at our own things but every man alſo on the things of others," Phil. ii. 4. It is true we are called to a more ſpecial ſympathy with ſome than with others. The bonds of nature are not cancelled by chriſtianity, but ſtrengthened; and therefore without doubt

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we are not only allowed, but obliged to a more particular ſympathy with our relations, or acquaintance with friends. "To him that is afflicted, pity ſhould be ſhewed from his friend," from him eſpecially, Job vi. 14. And ordinarily we are called to intereſt ourſelves in the ſufferings of our fellow Chriſtians with more tenderneſs, than in the ſufferings of the world at large: That "if one member (of the chriſtian body) ſuffer, all the members ſuffer with it," 1 Cor. xii. 26. and Heb. xiii. 3. "Remember them that are in bonds," i. e. for righeouſneſs ſake, "as bound with them; and them which ſuffer adverſity" upon that account, "as being yourſelves alſo in the body," i. e. as belonging to the ſame body of Chriſt to which they belong. But there is a general compaſſion and ſympathy due to all men, as they come within our notice and reach, even to the worſt of men. To rejoice in the miſeries of any as ſuch, is moſt unchriſtian; and to have no manner of concern for them, is certainly at leaſt a great defect in chriſtianity: for we are taught to "weep with them that weep," without excluding any, Rom. xii. 15.

And where there is really ſuch a diſpoſition of mind, it will expreſs itſelf in the proper inſtances and fruits of mercy. The bowels of mercy we are to put on, muſt not be ſhut up; as they are if we ſatisfy ourſelves with a mere tenderneſs of mind, when we have it in our power to contribute to their relief and help. The merciful will not think it too much to undergo ſome pain and labour in order to

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ſoften the cares, or divert the pains, or remove the diſtempers, or ſolve the doubts and perplexities of their neighbours. They will chearfully encounter with ſome difficulties for righting the injured and oppreſſed, if they can have a reaſonable proſpect of ſucceſs: And eſpecially in proportion to their circumſtances, they will be ready to "draw out their ſoul to the hungry;" as the expreſſion is, Iſa. lviii. 10. i. e. to draw out their inward compaſſion, by "dealing their bread to the hungry," ver. 7. and by "ſatisfying the afflicted ſoul," as far as they can, ver. 10. The apoſtle James repreſents the abſurdity of pretending to ſympathy and compaſſion without this, James ii. 15, 16. "If a brother or ſiſter be naked and deſtitute of daily food; and one of you ſay unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and filled; notwithſtanding ye give them not thoſe things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" And St. John exhorts us to ſhew the ſincerity of our love by the feeling expreſſions of it. 1 John iii. 17, 18. "Whoſo hath this world's goods, and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, or in tongue [only,] but in deed and in truth."

Where people are not in a capacity for relieving the neceſſities of others themſelves, they may exerciſe their compaſſion as acceptably to God, by applying to thoſe who are more capable, if they have an intereſt in them: whereby indeed they may ſerve three good purpoſes

purposes at once; pursue their own charitable temper, excite others to their duty, and help the distressed. Or if they should not know where to make application with prospect of success, yet all have one way left to express their disposition to mercy, which will be pleasing to God, and may be profitable to men; and that is, by prayer to the father of mercies on behalf of the distressed.

3. This temper should be exercised with respect to particular injuries done by others to ourselves, upon account of which we may have them at our mercy. As, suppose, by injurious reflections upon our reputations, or by occasioning some damage to our substance, or in other ways of using us ill. This is a peculiar province for mercy to display itself.

Governors indeed are not obliged to shew mercy to such offenders as endeavour to overturn the state, or disturb the public peace, by forbearing to punish them according to their deserts. It is the duty of their office to be "terrors to evil doers," as well as "a praise to them that do well." It is one of the greatest blessings of the present world, that there is such a power lodged somewhere in every society, to restrain those by the terror of punishment from evil actions, who will not forbear them upon principle. And if there was not actual executions of punishment upon bold offenders, laws would soon lose all their force, and be mere scare-crows; societies must be dissolved, and there would be no living in the world. Mercy to great offend-

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ers would in some cases entail guilt upon a land; as in the case of murder, where the law of God and nature require blood for blood. And in many other cases it would be the greatest cruelty to the community, by continuing it in danger from roaring lions and ranging bears, who neither fear God nor regard man; and by encouraging others to offend upon hope of impunity. It must therefore always be left to the wisdom and judgment of those in power, to determine how far at any time there may be a relaxation of the severity of laws in particular instances, without danger or prejudice to the community.

My view is to consider private and personal injuries. And here,

I am far from saying, that christianity in all cases obliges us to put them up, without any endeavour to right ourselves, either in our reputation or our property. Our usefulness depends upon our reputation; and therefore when that is remarkably attacked, and we cannot vindicate ourselves without the prosecution and punishment of those who unrighteously strike at it, it is past doubt that we may and ought to do ourselves justice that way; Mercy to others in such circumstances would be injustice to ourselves. And in case of injury done us in our property, religion does not forbid us to take advantage of the laws of our country against lawless men: we should give an ill example of mischievous consequence to the public, if out of a foolish lenity we should give up our own rights, when they are not

merely our own, but ſtand connected with the rights of the ſociety: which is the caſe, when the crime is of a very pernicious tendency, and the perſon who commits it appears to be accuſtomed to it, and in no likely diſpoſition to leave it.

But a merciful temper, when injuries are offered, ſhould ſhew itſelf in ſuch inſtances as theſe:

We ſhould maintain a good-will to thoſe who injure us, as far as is conſiſtent with the public ſafety and our own. We ſhould be ſorry for their ſin, and heartily wiſh their repentance and everlaſting welfare.

If there is any probable hope of their being reclaimed, we ſhould try mild methods firſt, to bring them to reaſon, and allow time for obſerving how they operate, before we come to extremities. "Charity ſuffereth long," 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

If we have received prejudice by their means, but it was undeſigned on their part; if in charity we have reaſon to paſs that judgment; not only mercy, but juſtice requires us not to take any advantage we may have againſt them. If the providence of God has unexpectedly reduced them without their own viſible fault, ſo as to diſable them to anſwer our demands from them; to treat them with ſeverity in ſuch a caſe, would be to fly in the face of providence.

If they have been deſignedly injurious to us, but give credible marks of repentance, we are obliged heartily to forgive them whatever their offences have been.

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If they have wronged us, but we know are now utterly incapable to make us reparation; mercy will certainly prompt to be content with what can be had; and will never allow us to say, If I cannot have my debt, I will have the man's bones. Nor will it suffer us to proceed to extreme rigour in such circumstances wherein the innocent must be deeply involved with the guilty, and the utter ruin of a family must ensue upon carrying matters to the greatest height. Mercy in such a case should temper justice; and it will do so, where a merciful disposition prevails.

II. I proceed to shew the peculiar engagements that lie upon Christians to be of a merciful disposition.

1. It is most frequently inculcated upon us as a necessary duty. By frequent precepts, Luke vi. 36. "Be ye merciful," Eph. iv. 32. "Be kind one to another, forgiving one another." 1 Pet. iii. 8. "Be of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful." It is represented as an eminent branch of the goodness which God requires of men. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy?" Mic. vi. 8. An unmerciful spirit is declared to be inconsistent with the love of God in the soul. "Whoso shutteth the bowels of compassion, ——— how dwelleth the love of God in him?" 1 John iii. 17. A tender sympathy is emphatically described as the fulfilling of Christ's law, Gal. vi. 2. "Bear

" Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

2. It is made an express term of our acceptance with God, Psal. xviii. 25. " With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful." Matth. v. 7. " Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." Matth vi. 14, 15. " If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." The same thing is represented in a very affecting parable, Matt. xviii. 23. &c. wherein the king of heaven is described as calling his servants to an account, and out of compassion forgiving one of them a debt of ten thousand talents; while this same servant used the extremest rigor to a fellow servant that owed him but an hundred pence: whereupon his Lord is represented after the manner of men, as recalling his forgiveness, and insisting a-fresh upon his debt to him with the utmost severity; to teach us what our Lord delivers at the close as the moral of the parable, ver. 35. " So shall likewise my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." The process of the great day is described as turning eminently upon this point, both in the goodness and severity of God, Matth. xxv. 34. to the end. We are told on the one hand, Jam. ii. 13. that " he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy:" and on the other hand, that " God is not unrighteous, to forget any work or labour

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of love, ſhewed toward his name in miniſtering to the ſaints," Heb. vi. 10. Would to God that all who name the name of Chriſt, would ſeriouſly lay to heart things ſo ſtrongly and frequently ſaid.

Nor is it any wonder that this ſhould be made an indiſpenſible term of the divine favour and of our eternal happineſs; ſince,

3. We are moſt fully taught our own need of divine mercy. We have conſtant occaſion for mercy to pardon, and grace to help, Heb. iv. 16. None of us can come to God as innocent creatures but as penitents, who muſt be beholden to infinite mercy for the pardon of innumerable offences, and for the acceptance of our beſt ſervices, and cannot hope for any benefit at his hands upon the foot of deſert, but as the fruit of ſovereign grace and favour. And can we come to God with an humble apprehenſion of our own guilt and unworthineſs, and yet allow an unrelenting temper to our neighbour? How can we have the confidence in ſuch a frame to offer to God that petition of the Lord's-prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors?" The very requeſt, coming from a hard-hearted and implacable man, is no better than to beſpeak a denial. Can we be ſenſible according to the elegant repreſentation of the parable lately mentioned, that our debt to God is as "ten thouſand talents;" and yet heſitate upon forgiving our neighbour the trifle of "an hundred pence?" That is a vaſt diſproportion; but falls much beneath the reality of the caſe. Can we have the face to be pe-

titioners for his compaſſion and indulgence every moment, and yet be obdurate to the cries of our fellow-creatures, or think it beneath us to have any regard for them in their wants and diſtreſſes?

4. God's actual mercy to us is therefore ſet in our view in the Goſpel, as a pattern for this holy diſpoſition. He is "the father of mercies, rich in mercy; his tender mercies are over all his works." He is "full of compaſſion." The courſe of providence and redemption are the brighteſt demonſtrations of it. He continually ſupplies our returning wants, often before we call upon him, and eſpecially he ſatisfies our deſires, and anſwers our humble intreaties. He remembered us in the low eſtate of our apoſtacy when no other eye pitied us, and no other hand could ſave us; and out of the riches of his grace gave his only-begotten Son to be the propitiation for our ſins. All his mercy to us is diſintereſted; he never can have any need of us, as we may have of the meaneſt of our fellow creatures; there was nothing but miſery and neceſſity on our part to move his tender regard. He was highly provoked by us, ſo that reſentment inſtead of relief might in all reaſon have been expected; yet then mercy rejoiced over judgment. Can I then beſeech you to put on bowels of mercy, by any ſtronger argument than by the mercies of God? The Scripture dwells upon this conſideration: "Be ye merciful, as your Father alſo is merciful," Luke vi. 36. "Love your enemies, &c. that ye may be the children of your Father

er which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," Matth. v. 44, 45. "Be tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Eph. iv. 32.

5. The Son of God gave us a most illustrious pattern of mercy. This was his great inducement to vail his original glory, and to assume our nature; not our merit, but our misery. He came to "seek and save them that were lost," to "save us from our sins," and "from the wrath to come" due for them.

When he was actually made flesh, there never was such a pattern of mercy in our nature. Almost all his words and works breathed this.

How singular was his compassion to the souls of men? When he "saw them as sheep without a shepherd," without proper and good instructors in the way to heaven, "he was moved with compassion on them," Matth ix. 36. And that compassion induced him to be their unwearied instructor himself; to go about through their cities and villages preaching the doctrine of the kingdom, accommodating himself to their capacities and circumstances, taking every advantage to enlighten their minds and remove their prejudices, and guide their feet in the way of peace. When any of his hearers perversely opposed the design of his instructions and miracles, he was "grieved for the hardness of their hearts," Mark iii. 5. And when he plainly foresaw

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that the body of the Jewish nation were about to fill up the measure of their iniquities by rejecting and crucifying him the Lord of glory, he shed tears of sorrow for them, because they would "not know the things of their peace," till they were "hid from their eyes," Luke xix. 41, 42.

His sympathy with men in their bodily wants and sorrows was also very conspicuous. We often read of his being "moved with compassion" upon several distressing occasions, and so being led to relieve them. From these bowels of tender mercy he was induced to heal a sick multitude, Matth. xiv. 13, 14. and to cure the blind men that cried after him, while the multitude rebuked them, chap. xx. 34. and to restore to life the only son of the woman of Nain, Luke vii. 12——15. He bore an affectionate part with the mourners at Lazarus's grave; "he wept and groaned in spirit," John xi. 35, 38. Every miracle that he wrought, was a relief to men in one or another distress; excepting two: one of which, in permitting the devils to enter the herd of swine, Matth viii. was after an act of great mercy in delivering two men who had been sorely tormented by those devils; which was also an instance of mercy to the people of the country, who had been in continual danger before from those possessed men, ver. 28. And the other, of cursing a barren fig tree, so that it immediately withered away, Matth. xxi 19. was intended with no considerable loss or prejudice to any, to warn his disciples by an instructive

ſtructive emblem of the danger of unfruitfulneſs.

He was ready to perform kind offices to all ſorts of people in diſtreſs, whether good or bad. Though he ſeemed more ſhy of relieving a Gentile during his perſonal miniſtry, and before the wall of partition was broken down, leſt he ſhould offend the Jews, to whom he was peculiarly ſent; yet we find as illuſtrious a fruit of his gracious compaſſion to the woman of Canaan, as any in the Goſpel-hiſtory, Matth. xv. 28. Even his enemies felt the benefit of his miraculous power: ſo he healed the ear of Malchus the high-prieſt's ſervant, when he was among thoſe who came to apprehend him.

He did not always ſtay for deſire and application, but would even ſurpriſe a miſerable object with the offer of his help. Thus he acted with reference to the man who waited at the pool of Bethesda, and "had an infirmity thirty eight years: When Jeſus ſaw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that caſe, he ſaith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?' The impotent man not knowing him, only tells him his helpleſs caſe, but without expectation of a miraculous cure; but Chriſt pronounced the healing word, and made the poor man to feel its healing virtue, ere he was aware, John v. 5——9. Such was his diſpoſition to mercy.

And his benignity is not leſſened now when he is paſſed into the heavens. For ſtill "we have not an high-prieſt who cannot be touched

ed with the feeling of our infirmities," Heb. iv. 15. As they are not out of the reach of his knowledge, so they still move his compassionate regard: and we may suppose him saying to us from heaven those gracious words under them, which he did to St. Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 9. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And upon the foot of the blessed discoveries of the Gospel, we "look for his mercy unto eternal life," Jude 21.

Upon the whole then,

1. If the Gospel lays us under so various and so strong engagements to a merciful disposition, where shall the cruel and the savage appear? If a compassionate temper, ready to express itself in the kind and beneficent fruits of it, is made necessary to a well grounded hope of God's favour; what must become of those who are perfectly insensible of the calamities of others, unmoved at their cries, and inexorable to their intreaties? Of the spiteful and malicious? Of the injurious oppressor, that "sees the anguish of his brother's soul, when he beseeches, but will not hear?" What must be the end of the bloody persecutor?

2. Let us then, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved," as his peculiar people and beloved children, studiously put on bowels of mercy. Shall others, who make no such pretence, be induced by a goodness of nature, or by some ignobler motives, to shew mercy to the miserable in many amiable instances; and shall we, who profess Christianity, or to be

be called into the kingdom and fellowship of God's dear Son, come behind them? We, who acknowledge ourselves to need so much mercy from God; who have already received such rich fruits of it, and have all our future expectations from the same source? We, who are not encouraged to hope for divine mercy without exercising it to our fellow-creatures? We, who are called the followers of the merciful Jesus? Certainly many of the heathen world will rise up in judgment against those pretended Christians, who shut up the bowels of their compassion from their neighbour, and will condemn them.

SERMON XIII.

Veracity, or Truth between Man and Man.

EPHES. iv. 25.

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.

THE apostle in some verses before the text had represented the gross corruptions that prevailed in the Gentile world; and then his charitable hope of the Ephesians,

ſians to whom he wrote, that they had learned Chriſt ſo as to make them new men, quite another ſort of people in the temper of their ſpirits and in the courſe of their converſation, from what they had once been themſelves, and from what the body of the heathens ſtill were.

Having expreſſed ſuch a charitable perſuaſion concerning them, he proceeds to exhort them to behave accordingly; cautioning them againſt many ſins, which abounded among thoſe who had not yet received the knowledge of the truth; and exciting to ſeveral particular duties, to which the new nature would prompt them. He begins with the exhortation in the text, to a ſtrict regard for truth, or veracity.

This was a duty eſpecially fit to be inculcated upon converts from paganiſm; not only as lying, among other evil practices, was common and cuſtomary every where among them; but as ſome of their moſt celebrated maſters of wiſdom taught looſer principles upon this head, than upon any other ſubjects of morality. They eſteemed lying in many caſes to be lawful and juſtifiable; for which Dr. Whitby upon the place produces ſeveral paſſages out of their writings. It was therefore peculiarly ſuitable, that when the apoſtle puts the Epheſians in mind of the better inſtructions they had learned from "the truth as it is in Jeſus," or from the chriſtian revelation, which eminently bears the character of the doctrine of truth; he ſhould begin with preſſing them to a ſtricter regard to truth,

truth, than they had either practiſed or been taught before their converſion. And ſo he does in the words read. "Wherefore putting away lying, ſpeak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another."

Upon this head it will be proper, I. To explain the precept here recommended to Chriſtians, or the ſocial duty which is preſcribed by the words. II. To conſider the reaſon which the apoſtle gives for it. And then to cloſe with a practical application.

I. I would explain and ſtate the ſocial duty which is here recommended to Chriſtians.

The apoſtle for greater emphaſis had deſcribed the general change made in the ſpirits and lives of Chriſtians by the Goſpel, both negatively and poſitively; by "putting off the old man, and putting on the new," ver. 22, 24. In like manner he does for the ſame reaſon in reference to this particular virtue. On the one hand, he calls the Epheſians to "put away lying;" and on the other, to "ſpeak every man truth with his neighbour."

Truth in Scripture, and in common uſe, hath ſeveral acceptations. Sometimes it ſignifies the real nature of things in themſelves: And that is the ſame, whether we think at all of it or not, however we judge about it; for our judgment cannot alter the nature of things. Sometimes it ſignifies the conformity of our apprehenſions to the nature of things; that we conceive aright of them, and juſt as they really are: Error and miſtake ſtand op-

poſed to truth in this ſenſe. Every man, as far as he is concerned to think at all about things, ſhould endeavour to judge as truly of them as he can, or agreeably to what they are in themſelves: And when he ſpeaks to his neighbour, he ſhould communicate truth to him, in oppoſition to error, as far as he is able. But a man may vent error and miſtake without the guilt of lying.

Therefore we muſt come to a third ſenſe of truth; the agreement of our words to our own ſenſe and apprehenſion. And lying, properly ſpeaking, ſtands oppoſod to truth only in this ſignification. A man may ſpeak the truth to his neighbour in this moral ſenſe, and in the ſenſe of the text, even when he is involuntarily miſtaken: And on the other hand, he may be guilty of the ſin of lying, when he ſpeaks to his neighbour that which is a real truth in itſelf, as long as he does not think it ſo. A man may be guilty of other ſins which will be ruinous to him in the day of account, when he judges amiſs, or contrary to the truth of things, under ſufficient means of better information: God may condemn him for his ſloth and negligence, or for his corrupt prejudices in ſuch a caſe. But he is not directly and properly chargeable with the ſin of lying, except when he ſpeaks contrary to his own preſent ſenſe and judgment.

Speaking, or writing, which is but another way of ſpeaking, are intended to be means of communicating our minds one to another. Lying is giving a falſe repreſentation of our minds;

minds; ſpeaking what we think to be falſe, to deceive others.

Both of theſe are to be taken in for explaining this vice; that the matter of what we ſay is falſe, or different from what we believe to be true; and that it be ſpoken with intention to deceive him to whom we ſpeak.

There may be either ſeparately, without incurring the guilt of lying. It is not a lie for inſtance, to repeat a known falſehood in the way of a narrative, as long as a man mentions it not as his own ſenſe, but declares that he believes it to be falſe. Nor is it repugnant to veracity to uſe figurative expreſſions, which yet are not ſtrictly true in the literal ſenſe; as long as by common uſe or the manner of ſpeaking, the deſign of them is eaſy enough to be underſtood. As in the uſe of an hyperbole; or, when we exceed what is ſtrictly true, either in magnifying or diminiſhing a thing, but every one at the ſame time may underſtand that it is intended for no more than a figure: So the Evangeliſt ſays, John xxi. 25. "There are many other things which Jeſus did, the which if they ſhould be written every one, I ſuppoſe that even the world itſelf could not contain the books that ſhould be written." Which none can underſtand to import any more, than that the books which muſt be written upon ſuch a ſubject would be endleſs. So the uſe of an ironical way of ſpeaking, is not inconſiſtent with veracity: that is, when the ſtrict literal ſenſe of the words ſeems to ſignify one thing, but

but the circumſtances of the caſe more plainly ſhew that the quite contrary is meant. As in Elijah's conteſt with the falſe prophets of Baal, when they had offered their ſacrifice, and called upon their falſe god from morning till noon to ſend fire down to conſume the ſacrifice, Elijah did not think it unlawful or unbecoming to deride them and their god, that he might awaken them out of their ſtupidity, and ſhew their folly to all the people, by an irony; 1 Kings xviii. 27. "Cry aloud," ſays he, "for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is purſuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he ſleepeth, and muſt be awaked." Here was no violation of truth, in ſaying in the manner, and on the occaſion that he ſaid ſo, that Baal was a god. Every one that heard him, muſt underſtand him to mean the contrary in the ſtrongeſt manner. In all figurative ways of ſpeaking, it is neceſſary to their conſiſtence with truth, that it be apparent they are intended for figures: And then, if they are apt to expreſs our minds to the hearer, they are words of truth; but break in upon truth if they are intended to miſlead him.

Nor is an intention to deceive others always criminal, if no falſehood be ſpoken for that purpoſe. It is not unlawful to deceive an enemy in war by a ſtratagem, though it would be to aſſert a falſehood to him. I may foreſee that my ſilence, or forbearing to ſay all that I know of a matter, may lead my neighbour into a miſtake; and yet may lawfully forbear to inform him of the truth; yea

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in ſome caſes it may be my duty not to do it: As, where a greater good requires, that he ſhould be kept ignorant of it: or ſometimes for the ſake of his own good; ſuppoſe, for inſtance, it is known that a ſick perſon would refuſe a medicine very likely to be of ſervice to him, if he was acquainted what it was; certainly a phyſician, or a parent, or friend, may very lawfully endeavour to deceive him by any method conſiſtent with truth: or if a matter is intruſted with me as a ſecret, and another would fain diſcover it, who has no right to know it; if either by ſilence, or by a partial, but true account, I can divert his inquiry, it will be no violation of truth. Jeremiah's conduct may be an inſtance, Jer. xxxviii. He had been thrown into a filthy dungeon by king Zedekiah at the inſtigation of the princes of Judah; but, upon the interceſſion of Ebed-melech, he was admitted to a private audience of the king, wherein the main ſubject of his diſcourſe was to acquaint the king with the mind of God for his direction in his preſent circumſtances. The king at parting charges him to conceal this from the princes, and if they ſhould come to examine him about the matter, that he ſhould ſay unto them, ver. 25, 26. "I preſented my ſupplication before the king, that he would not cauſe me to return to Jonathan's houſe to die there." And we are told, ver. 27. that, "when the princes came to him, he told them according to all theſe words that the king had commanded: So they left off ſpeaking with him, for the matter was not perceived." No

doubt this was part of the converſation, and the king had commanded him to conceal the reſt on pain of death: he was under no obligation to acquaint the princes with the reſt; and he knew he ſhould run the hazard of his life from them, if he informed them of the meſſage which he had delivered from God to the king, becauſe it was moſt diſagreeable to their mind: And therefore he deceived them, by letting them know only part of the truth. In this he was no way worthy of blame.

But to affirm any falſehood in order to deceive others, is never juſtifiable. It is not lawful to lie for God, or for the greateſt advantage that can be propoſed by it to our neighbours, or to ourſelves. A miſchievous lie, that is deſigned to the prejudice of any, is more heinous and aggravated upon other accounts, than an officious or a jocular lie: But lying in any kind is a violation of truth, which the beſt end propoſed by it cannot juſtify. And that for this one reaſon, becauſe we muſt "not do evil that good may come," Rom. iii. 8. That lying is always evil, will appear when I come to the ſecond head.

But I would firſt be a little more particular in explaining this exhortation, by ſhewing how it is to be obſerved eminently in three caſes. In common converſation. In bearing teſtimony. And in making and performing promiſes.

1. Truth is to be obſerved in common converſation. People have more eſpecial need in ſome reſpects to be admoniſhed of their

their obligations inviolably to maintain truth here: for many are more ready to allow themſelves to tranſgreſs in what they count trivial inſtances than upon ſolemn occaſions; and yet by ſuch beginnings way is made for the diſregard of truth in the moſt conſiderable matters in proceſs of time. As men often proceed gradually from cuſtomary breach of their word, to break their oaths too at length; ſo when once a ſtrict regard to truth upon common occaſions is loſt, it ſeldom remains long unſhaken in caſes of greater importance. The Scriptures, and as we ſhall ſee preſently, the reaſon of things alſo, oblige us to maintain truth inviolably and univerſally, without indulging ourſelves in any ſort of known falſehood. The prohibition of lying, both in the Old and New Teſtament, is abſolute: "Ye ſhall not lie one to another," Lev. xix. 11. "Lie not one to another," Col. iii. 9. And ſo is the injunction of truth, "Speak every man truth to his neighbour," Zech. viii. 16. "Whatſoever things are true—— think on theſe things," Phil. iv. 8. Such declarations of the mind of God leave us no licenſe to make free with truth on the ſlighteſt occaſions.

How common ſoever therefore the practice may be, we ſhould not think ourſelves at liberty to make profeſſions of kindneſs, where none at all is meant. Civility is one thing, and fit to be profeſſed and practiſed to all; but profeſſion of diſtinguiſhing reſpect and eſteem is another thing; and when there is nothing inward to anſwer it, is inconſiſtent with

with the candor and ſimplicity which ſhould be found in a Chriſtian. To give men commendations, which at the ſame time we think them not to deſerve; or to flatter them upon excellencies we do not eſteem them poſſeſſed of, if they ſhould paſs with us for words of courſe now, yet I doubt will not paſs ſo eaſily in the judgment.

There are a ſet of people who think to recommend themſelves to thoſe with whom they converſe, by a ſurpriſing ſtory of their own invention, or by pretending with a boaſting air to things which they never did, or by magnifying matters beyond the bounds of probability; and think any thing of this kind no more than a harmleſs amuſement, as long as they avoid making free with their neighbour's character. Such facetious lies may not be a direct breach upon charity; but they are a breach upon truth, and weaken mens regards for it: and certainly if ſuch inventions happen to produce ſome mirth and entertainment for the preſent in company, yet they can give neither a man nor his friend pleaſure in the reflection, when it is known that all this hath no foundation of truth.

2. Truth ſhould be maintained in bearing teſtimony. Many who make no account of violating truth in a theme of common converſation, where they apprehend none to be injured; yet cannot allow themſelves to bear falſe witneſs, where they think their neighbour directly concerned, in his life, or property, or reputation, or other valuable intereſts. *A-*

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false witness that speaketh lies, and so *soweth discord among brethren*, may as yet be an opprobrious name to some, who have not such an universal regard to truth as they should have, because of the obvious mischief which accrues to society from a false witness.—But I doubt some will incur this guilt in God's account, who reckon themselves clear of it.

A conscientious regard to truth will engage us to be very careful, that we spread nothing to the lessening or reproach of our neighbour, of which we have not good assurance: that we publish not a defamation upon a hear say, nor *take up*, without sufficient grounds, *a report against our neighbour*. This is the settled character of a citizen of Zion, Psal. xv. 3. Reports which we divulge, carry the authority of our names to support them, as far as that will go, farther than we bear our testimony against them. And if we hastily put an uncertain story we have heard out of our power by making it public, we may prove the false witness of a scandal to many, who take it up upon our authority, without having either inclination or opportunity to examine the grounds we went upon.

If we are called to give public testimony between man and man, a sincere respect to truth, will engage to a careful recollection before we give our testimony, what we can say upon the mattter: it will dispose to lay aside affection on one hand, and prejudice on the other, and impartially to relate the true state of things, as far as we can bear witness

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to them : Nakedly to repreſent facts, as they have come within our notice.

Here we ſhould think ourſelves obliged not only to ſpeak nothing but the truth, but to ſpeak the whole truth without concealment or diſguiſe. Though we are not bound in every caſe to ſpeak the whole truth ; yet certainly when a matter depends either in whole or in part upon our evidence, and we come in as witneſſes, we are bound not only to avoid all direct falſehood, but alſo not to omit any thing we can diſcover, which may give light into the true merits of the cauſe. This ought to be ſacred to an honeſt man, when he is only heard upon his word, as well as when he is ſworn to " ſpeak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. " If a matter ſhould be wrong taken by a partial repreſentation, and ſo a wrong judgment paſt in a cauſe ; though we ſhould have ſaid nothing untrue as far as we went, yet we ſhould be juſtly accounted acceſſory to that wrong judgment by concealing what we had farther to offer. And thus partial evidences will have all the ſame evil effects, that evidence directly falſe can have.

3. Truth muſt be exerciſed in our promiſes and engagements. And veracity requires two things in relation to them.

(1.) That we really intend to perform them, when they are made. In matters where we were at full liberty before, promiſes lay us under obligation, and give our neighbour a right ; and therefore we ſhould never allow ourſelves to make them, unleſs there be an intention

tention to make them good. A citizen of Zion is careful of that, Pſal. xv. 2. He "ſpeaketh the truth in his heart." He ſpeaks according to the true meaning and deſign of his heart. To engage to do a thing, when at the time of the engagement we foreſee that we cannot accompliſh it, or have it not in our intention, is really to injure and impoſe upon our neighbour, and to wrong our own ſouls. We ſhould not therefore be raſh in making promiſes, but weigh before hand the lawfulneſs, the practicableneſs, the expedience of what we undertake: for the ſame thing, which Solomon ſays of vows to God, will hold true of promiſes to men, Eccl. v. 5. "Better is it that thou ſhouldſt not vow, than that thou ſhouldſt vow and not pay."

(2.) That we are careful of performances, after they are made. This is as eſſential to veracity as the former.

Not but that there are ſome caſes which may ſupercede our obligation. If we are unexpectedly diſabled afterwards by the providence of God, God, and conſcience, and all reaſonable men, will diſcharge us from the guilt of falſehood in not making our word good. We could only be ſupoſed to promiſe, if we were able. Or if we ſhould be convinced that the matter of our promiſe is unlawful; we muſt repent of our raſhneſs in making it, and not add ſin to ſin by executing it. Herod ought with repentance to have broken even his oath, rather than have done ſo cruel and injurious a thing in purſuit of it, as beheading John the Baptiſt, if really that

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was included in his oath: indeed he might more juſtly have given that wicked woman who ſolicited it, the half of his kingdom, according to the letter of his promiſe, than the Baptiſt's head. And if unforeſeen ſuperior engagements require our attendance, at the time when the promiſe was to be performed, they muſt take place of it. As ſuppoſe you have undertaken to do a particular ſervice to a perſon at ſuch a time, but afterwards you underſtand that a wife, or a child, or ſome in whom you have a near concern, are in danger of life without your immediate aſſiſtance; the promiſe is evidently ſuperſeded by higher engagements. No promiſe can be made in bar of all future contingencies, nor can releaſe a man from that which the providence of God makes much more immediately his duty.

But veracity obliges to performance, when we lawfully may do it; when we are in a capacity, and not called off from it by much more evident duty. A lover of truth will not ſatisfy himſelf to have given his word, to be rid of preſent importunity, or to pleaſe his neighbour for the time, without any concern about the matter afterwards. Though the performance in the event, ſhould prove a conſiderable damage to himſelf, and a diſadvantageous bargain, yet he will not be a covenant-breaker. "He ſweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not," Pſal. xv. 4. If he is not able at preſent to make good his engagements, yet he will bear them in mind, and make conſcience of performing them in caſe

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of reſtoration to capacity, though he ſhould be under no obligation by human laws to do ſo.

II. I proceed to conſider the reaſon which the apoſtle gives for the inviolable maintainance of truth; "Becauſe we are members one of another:" which may be underſtood either as applicable to mankind in common, or to Chriſtians in particular.

1. This argument is applicable to mankind in general. We are members one of another, as we partake of the ſame human nature, and in that reſpect are upon a level: We are members of ſociety in common, intitled to the ſame rights, claims, and expectations one from another as men; and are mutually helpful and ſubſervient, as the members of the body are to each other: and the principal link that holds us together, is mutual confidence, founded upon the hope of common fidelity.

Now lying makes void and uſeleſs the great inſtrument of ſociety, the faculty of ſpeech or writing. The power of ſpeech was given us by our Creator, and the art of writing ſince found out, on purpoſe that we might be able ſo to convey our ſenſe to others, that they may diſcern it, where we pretend to expreſs it, juſt as if they were ſo far privy to what paſſes in our minds. By theſe means, joined with the power of reaſon, man is a creature fitted for much more agreeable ſociety than the inferior creatures are. But as far as the inward ſenſe of our minds, when we profeſs to give it, is not faithfully conveyed; ſo far

theſe means of union and correſpondence between man and man, muſt neceſſarily become the means of diſuniting and eſtranging them one from another.

Truth hereupon becomes a branch of righteouſneſs, what every man hath a right to claim, and exact from every man; as it is the proper and natural uſe of that inſtrument of ſociety, which our common Maker has furniſhed us with for mutual good and ſervice. And therefore "a righteous man hateth lying," Prov. xiii. 5.

In fact it is what every man would expect and deſire from another. The moſt common lyar, the falſeſt witneſs, the moſt perfidious covenant breaker, would have others ſpeak the truth to him, and is ready to complain when they do not: and therefore by that obvious rule of equity, of doing as we would be done unto, every man has a right to expect and claim the ſame thing from us.

And unleſs truth be inviolably obſerved in every thing, the bonds of human ſociety cannot fail to be weakened. If a man allow himſelf to throw off a regard to truth in one inſtance; when this is known, it is impoſſible that another ſhould be aſſured where he will ſtop; and conſequently mutual confidence muſt be deſtroyed. It is a man's profeſſion that he eſteems truth ſacred in itſelf, and conſequently in all caſes, that is the ſecurity for his credibility upon his word in any caſe. As long as we cannot charge him with any violation of it, we are obliged to credit him. But when he is convicted of falſehood, and eſpecially

cially if he declares that he thinks himself not bound to the observation of truth in some cases; as that faith is not to be kept with hereticks; or that he should not scruple a lie for its own sake, unless upon account of some farther mischief attending it; then, I say, a man may justly be esteemed to disclaim the sacredness of truth in itself; and so his neighbour cannot believe him upon his bare word. It cannot be wondered at, that a known liar hardly meets with credit, even when he speaks truth; and so the least impeachment of a man's veracity justly weakens his credit, and others confidence in him.

Every man must be sensible, what universal mischief this brings upon the world, and how it destroys the comfort and benefit of society. See a melancholy description of it in the corrupt state of Israel, Jer. ix. 4. 5. "Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; and weary themselves to commit iniquity."

The sight of abounding falsehood in the world brought in the use of oaths; in hope that by a direct appeal to God, and a solemn imprecation of his vengeance in case of perjury, men who are not restrained within the bounds of truth in common cases, might be awed into veracity upon important occasions by an immediate appeal to the great God.

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This practice in the present degenerate state of human nature is plainly countenanced by God in Scripture; and by the general consent of all civilized nations, "an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife," Heb. vi. 16. as the last appeal which men can make, and therefore the highest test of their veracity. And if men can allow themselves to falsify not only their word, but their oath, there is nothing by which they can be held, nor any security they can give to society, and therefore they must forfeit all the benefits of it, as such who are not capable members of it.

But we should consider ourselves as always under the eye of God, as well in what we say as in what we swear. If this was the general temper, there would be no occasion for the solemnity of oaths: and if men lose sight of this in common life, so as contentedly and customarily to prostitute truth, even where there is no direct appeal to God; their oath itself will hardly be sufficient to produce a full confidence in their veracity.

2. This argument may be particularly applicable to Christians. *We are members one of another*, in a more distinguishing sense, as we belong to the body of Christ. And this lays additional engagements upon all the visible members of that body to *put away lying* and to *speak the truth one to the other.*

In conformity to the common Father to whom we belong; who is eminently stiled "a God of truth," Deut. xxxii. 4. "His words are true," 2 Sam. vii. 28. Psal. cxix.

160. They are not only agreeable to the true nature of things, but are ſuited to convey the divine mind plainly and without diſguiſe to us. His promiſes are ſure and certain, ſuch as may firmly be relied upon. Falſehood is as impoſſible to him as any other imperfection. "God is not a man that he ſhould lie," Numb. xxiii. 19. His *promiſe* and his *oath* are *two immutable things, in which it is impoſſible for God to lie.* And if this is a perfection ſo eſſential to the bleſſed God, in which he ſo much glories, and which we have ſo much reaſon to venerate in him: if we are born of him, we ſhall ſtudy imitation: Therefore his children are deſcribed "as children that will not lie," Iſa. lxiii. 8. Liars, we are told, belong to another father, John viii. 44. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the luſts of your father ye will do.——There is no truth in him. When he ſpeaketh a lie, he ſpeaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it." This character is fixed upon him, as he pronounced the firſt lie that we find upon record in the Bible; when he told our firſt parents, "Ye ſhall not ſurely die," Gen. iii. 4.

In conformity to our Head the Lord Jeſus, there ſhould be a ſtrict obſervation of truth among Chriſtians. He came into the world "to bear witneſs to it," John xviii. 37. And he was and is "the faithful and true witneſs;" revealing the mind of God with the greateſt exactneſs, and having "no guile found in his mouth," in any part of his converſation.

In conformity to the Spirit that animates us, who is eminently described by this attribute, "the Spirit of truth," John xiv. 17. chap. xv. 26. whose revelations are contained in *the Scriptures of truth*, Dan. x. 21. where *that which is written is upright, even words of truth.* And therefore those who are taught by him, should shew it by the strictest regard to that which is made his noted Character in Scripture. This is therefore particularly described to be his fruit, Eph. v. 9. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness and truth." Which leads on to observe, that Christians are under strong engagements to veracity.

Because of the stress laid upon it in the rule by which all the Members of Christ's body are to be governed. The observation of truth is prescribed there in the strongest and most unlimited terms, as has been shewn. It is recommended by the clearest expressions of God's approbation, Prov. xii. 22. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly, are his delight." And eternal death is expressly denounced as the portion of liars. They bring up the rear in the catalogue of those who "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," Rev. xxi. 8. Whosoever *maketh a lie shall in no wise enter* into the heavenly Jerusalem, ver. 27. And the same is said of *whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*, chap. xx. 15.

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1. This is one remarkable evidence, how much Chriſtianity is calculated for the benefit of mankind and the good of ſociety at preſent, as well as for our everlaſting welfare; in that it ſo ſtrictly enjoins and inforces the exacteſt regard to truth. No man can be inſenſible that this would contribute greatly to the happineſs and comfort of life, if every man converſed with another without deceit and guile, ſo that there was no occaſion for juſt jealouſies and ſuſpicions. The chriſtian religion written in the heart will form a man to this.

2. We may ſee from hence, upon how good reaſon the chriſtian religion ſtrictly forbids common ſwearing. So our Saviour himſelf does, Matth. v. 34, 37. "I ſay unto you, Swear not at all——but let your communication be Yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatſoever is more than theſe, cometh of evil." The ſame precept for ſubſtance is repeated by the apoſtle James, chap. v. 12.

Not that we are to underſtand either Chriſt or the apoſtle as intending to repreſent an oath to be unlawful in all caſes. However abſolute the expreſſions may ſeem, "ſwear not at all," we cannot ſuppoſe them to forbid us to bear ſolemn teſtimony, or to give ſolemn aſſurance of fidelity upon oath, when called to either by lawful authority; ſince theſe were with God"s countenance, and by his appointment uſed in the church of God from

from the first ages of the world; and the apostle, after the precept of our Saviour, countenances the use of *an oath for confirmation* and to *end strife*, Heb. vi. 16. Nor are all appeals to God performed with seriousness and upon important occasions, even without the call of the magistrate, to be supposed unlawful to a Christian. We have many instances of such appeals or oaths made by the apostle Paul in his inspired writings;* who certainly knew, and would not transgress the mind of Christ in this matter.

The meaning then of these passages is to forbid all swearing in ordinary discourse and conversation; that we should satisfy ourselves with a bare affirmation or denial of a thing, and not to be ready at every turn to appeal to God for the truth of what we say, unless we are lawfully called to it: Nor use any of those methods of asseveration which may be esteemed petty oaths, as, by heaven, or the like; several of which both our Saviour and the apostle particularly mention; pointing to the practice of many of the Jews, who thought it lawful to swear by other things, as long as they used not the name of God. Instead of this, we are directed to go no farther in common converse than bare asserting or disowning a thing.

And the reason is obvious; Christianity most strictly enjoins veracity upon all Christ's followers; that they should have such an exact regard to truth in all they say, that they

* See 2 Cor. i. 23. chap. xi. 31. Gal. i. 20. Rom. i. 9.

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may deserve to be believed upon their word. He who does not so behave as to deserve credit upon this foundation in commom affairs, can hardly be more regarded upon the light and negligent use of an oath, which is the best that can be said of common swearing: And at the same time he depreciates the solemnity of an oath in extraordinary cases, by taking the name of God in vain, so as to give ground to fear that he trifles with it then as well as in common converse.

3. All that name the name of Christ, are concerned to see that they comply with the exhortation in the text. "If any man seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue," particularly from lying, surely "that man's religion is vain." And therefore we should use the most effectual means to secure our veracity.

We should maintain a constant sense of the great evil of falsehood, and of the excellence of truth: as the one is contrary to the God of truth, and the other his image; the one destructive of society, and the other the greatest strength and security to it.

We should be upon our guard against every thing that may be a temptation to falsehood. Guilt needs a lie to excuse it. Covetousness may prompt to falsehood for gratifying it; but a woe is entailed upon all such gains, Prov. xxi. 6. "The getting of treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death." Malice and ill-will sometimes lead to false charges to support them, when the reputation of an adver-

sary

ſary cannot be ſunk by true accuſations. And raſh ſpeaking often betrays into falſehood at unawares. All theſe therefore ſhould carefully be guarded againſt by every lover of truth.

We ought to take heed of any appearance of evil in this caſe: To keep at a remote diſtance from any thing that borders upon falſehood. This is the ſureſt way to avoid any vice.

And as in the practice of every other duty, and the avoidance of every other ſin, ſo here we ſhould join prayer to God with our own care and endeavours in ſuch language as that of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. cxix. 29. "Remove far from me the way of lying, and grant me thy law graciouſly."

4. Chriſtians ſhould do all they can to promote truth among others: Both for the honour of God, and the ſpiritual and eternal good of their neighbours, and the general intereſt of ſociety.

Such as have the care of youth, ſhould with the utmoſt and the moſt early care impreſs upon their minds their indiſpenſible obligations to maintain truth inviolate: They ſhould let them know by their conduct, that a lie is to be reckoned a greater fault than moſt of thoſe which they may intend to excuſe by it; at leaſt that any crime is more eaſy to be paſſed over by itſelf, than as aggravated by a covering of falſehood.

Falſehood ſhould upon all occaſions be diſcountenanced. A Chriſtian ſhould reſolve with the Pſalmiſt, that "he that telleth lies, ſhall not dwell in his ſight," Pſal. ci. 7. He

ſhould

ſhould frown upon the backbiter, and "not give heed to falſe lips." He ſhould countenance plain-dealing in all; and both expreſs a juſt abhorrence of flattery, and a real liking of frankneſs and openneſs, though it ſhould be ſhewn in truths that bear hard upon himſelf.

SERMON XIV.

Charitable Judging, in oppoſition to Cenſorioufneſs.

MATTH. vii. 1.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

AMONG the many important rules delivered by our Saviour in his comprehenſive ſermon on the mount, there are not many more needful in every age of the world than this. It was peculiarly ſuitable to the Jews, who were eminently cenſorious of all who were not of their nation and religion. And the ſame ſpirit of bigotry cloſely adhered to thoſe of them who embraced chriſtianity, after Chriſt had ſet up his church and kingkom, in relation to the Gentile converts; ſo that there was occaſion frequently to repeat to them ſuch an admonition as that in the text, which we find done in ſeveral of the apoſtoli-

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cal epiſtles. And, God knows, the ſame evil temper abounds in every age of the chriſtian church, ſo that the like caution is never unſeaſonable.

In the proſecution of the ſubject, I would I. Explain what is here forbidden. And, II. The motive by which the prohibition is inforced.

I. It is needful to explain this prohibition of our Lord and Maſter; in what ſenſe we are to underſtand him when he ſays, *judge not.*

The words in themſelves are very general; but the ſenſe of them may be eaſily underſtood, if we look into the context, and compare them with other Scriptures.

Nothing is plainer, than that Chriſt intends, not abſolutely to forbid any uſe of their own judgments. Judging is a natural faculty, which God hath given us all as rational creatures, and which he expects us to uſe in the beſt manner we can, according to every natural and acquired advantage for it, each of us for himſelf, to conduct us in the affairs of this world and in our way to a better. We act no farther as reaſonable creatures, either in civil concerns or in thoſe of religion, than we act upon our own judgments.

But it is judging of other people, which is the ſubject of the text; paſſing a judgment concerning their words, or actions, or intentions. The third, fourth, and fifth verſes of this chapter plainly ſhew, that it is our brother, that is, any other man, who is concerned in the judging ſpoken of.

And though the word itſelf doth not limit the

the ſenſe, either to judging well or ill of him; yet the uſe of it in the New Teſtament confines the meaning to judging ill or cenſuring him.

And yet even all ſuch judging of our neighbour is not deſigned to be forbidden.

The cenſure of the magiſtrate upon criminals that diſturb the public peace, and his puniſhing of them when found guilty, is ſo far from being diſcountenanced, that it is abſolutely neceſſary to the good of civil ſociety. Magiſtrates are inſtituted by God to be a terror to evil doers: And they are juſtly worthy of blame, when they bear the ſword in vain, by not executing judgment upon notorious offenders; which by the precept of God in Scripture, and by the claim of the ſociety in which they are, is their proper province.

Miniſters and Chriſtian ſocieties are not debarred from cenſuring thoſe in the way of cenſure which Chriſt has appointed them, who are of their own body, or who offer themſelves to be members of it, by denying them chriſtian communion with them, if they notoriouſly break the laws of Chriſt. This ſort of judging is made a duty by the Goſpel rule, "not to keep company" in chriſtian ſociety, "with any man that is called a brother, if he be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner," 1 Cor. v. 11. This is called "judging them that are within," ver. 12. judging them according to the rule of Chriſt to be unfit for chriſtian communion.

It is not unlawful for private perſons to entertain a fear, that evils may poſſibly be committed by thoſe in whom they have a concern, by means of the temptations which are known to attend their circumſtances; that is, ſuch a fear as may awaken prayer and endeavours for their good. "It may be," ſays Job of his ſons, when they had been feaſting together, "they have ſinned;" and therefore "he offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all;" Job i. 5. And the apoſtles expreſs their fears of the Chriſtians to whom they wrote, and gave them the moſt awful cautions accordingly, when at the ſame time they expreſſed a charitable hope of better things. "I fear," ſays St. Paul to the Corinthians, 2 Epiſt. xi. 3. "leſt by any means, as the ſerpent beguiled Eve through his ſubtilty, ſo your minds ſhould be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt."

So he warns the Hebrews of the dreadful danger of apoſtacy, and of the ſad effects to be expected from unfruitfulneſs under the advantages of the Goſpel; and yet tells them, that "he was perſuaded better things of them, and things that accompany ſalvation, though he thus ſpoke;" Heb. vi. 4—9. Fear and concern for others, that ariſes from a ſenſe of their danger, is the fruit of true charity conſiſtent with a good opinion, and very different from actual cenſures without a good foundation.

We ſhall not be chargeable with cenſoriouſneſs for judging any thing erroneous in the profeſſed ſentiments of others, or amiſs in their

their practice, which really appears so to us. If we believe ourselves in the right, we cannot but judge those who differ from us in the wrong: There is no uncharitableness in this; nor in endeavouring by fair reasoning to convince them of what we judge their mistake, or by fair reproof and advice to use our best endeavours that "sin may not lie upon them."

And to go a step farther, we are not forbid to judge those to be ill men, who give flagrant proofs of it by a course of evil actions, and whose sins go beforehand to judgment.

But the judging which we should avoid, may, I think, be reduced to the four following heads; pragmatical, rash, partial, and uncharitable judging.

1. Pragmatical judging is carefully to be avoided. We should not officiously pass our condemning sentence upon any persons or things without just warrant or authority.

Thus to censure things out of our province where we have no concern or call to pass any judgment at all, is a busy intermeddling. Many things may be proper for the cognizance and animadversion of the magistrate, with which private members of the community have nothing to do. Christ by his own example has taught us to consider, whether a thing be within our province, before we meddle with it. When a person said to him, "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me;" Jesus answered, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over

over you?" Luke xii. 13, 14. "It is none "of my province, whose kingdom is not of "this world, to determine disputes about "civil rights between you and your brother; "but it belongs to the magistrate, and there- "fore I will have nothing to do with it." Thus the apostle, 1 Cor. v. 12. "What have I to do," says he, "to judge them that are without?" It was his province so far to judge them who were within the pale of the christian church as to declare the mind of Christ for denying them christian communion who are notoriously scandalous, and accordingly he directs the Corinthian church to take care that this should be done. But for those who were without, and pretended not to christian communion, the christian church had nothing to do with them.

Another instance of pragmatical censure is, when men take upon them to judge of things above their reach; either from the defectiveness of their own capacity and furniture compared with others, or from the obscurity and unsearchableness of the matter upon which they pretend to pass a judgment. Men discover only their own ignorance and ill-nature, when they go beyond their depth in censure. As if, suppose, people of weak capacities, and who have had a very contracted education and acquaintance, should at every turn be arraigning the conduct of their rulers, while in truth they are by no means capable judges: If they knew the springs of action, or the many difficulties under which an administration may labour, it may be they might discern either

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wiſdom or unavoidable neceſſity in the ſteps they blame. The ſame may be ſaid of many other reflections and cenſures upon men and things, wherein very often the moſt clamorous fault-finders "ſpeak evil of things which they underſtand not," and they betray their folly to wiſer and more competent judges. There are other things in which no man can paſs a certain judgment concerning another; ſuch are the ſecrets of the heart, the thoughts and intentions: and yet how ready are the people to judge of theſe in the moſt cenſorious manner, as if they had a window into their neighbour's hearts, though we muſt acknowledge that the heart of man is unſearchable?

A farther inſtance eſpecially worthy of our notice upon this head is, when men take upon them to cenſure others without the authority of their rule. He would be an ill judge, who judges not according to law, but condemns men for things merely becauſe he does not like them, though the law leaves them indifferent; or paſſes a heavier cenſure upon them than the law does. It would be equally unjuſt, in us, and going out of our way, if we cenſure any as guilty of a crime, becauſe they happen not to think and act as we do, while we have no warrant from the word of God to pronounce it a crime. We muſt not make ſins and duties which God has never made ſo: we ought not to do ſo to ourſelves, by indulging unreaſonable ſcruples: much leſs ſhould we pretend to do it for other people. We muſt no more add to our rule than

diminish from it. A thing may appear doubtful to us, and then it will be proper that we should forbear it; but we must not pretend to condemn others for any such liberties which we cannot prove that God has made unlawful, much less for not conforming to us in things which we confess that God hath left indifferent. The apostles had frequent occasion in the beginning of christianity, to caution the converted Jews against censuring the Gentile converts without warrant from the christian rule. The Jewish converts would have had the Gentiles to observe the ceremonial law along with the christian institution. The apostles shewed that Christ had superseded this law, as indeed the Gentiles were never obliged to observe it. Therefore says St. Paul, Rom. xiv. 3. "Let not him which eateth not" the meats forbidden by the law of Moses, "judge him that eateth" them, as profane on that account, or not acccepted of God; "for God hath received him." And ver. 13. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more." To the same purpose, Col, ii. 16, 17. "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days; which were a shadow of good things to come." This prohibition is founded upon the declaration in ver. 14. that Christ had "blotted out the hand-writing of these ordinances, and taken them away, nailing them to his cross;" therefore let no man judge another for not observing them. The apostle James very emphatically represents the

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great evil of such censures, Jam. iv. 11, 12. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother," that is, as we must plainly understand him, for such things as the law of Christ allows; (he seems to have the same case in view, as St. Paul had in the places mentioned:) He that condemns his brother for such things, "speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law;" he censures the law as imperfect, for not having forbidden such things. "But if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law but a judge." Thou actest not as one under law to Christ, but who settest up for a censor of this law. Now "there is one lawgiver," that is Christ, "who is able to save and to destroy," and so to confirm his laws with proper sanctions: "Who art thou then that judgest another?" This passage plainly represents the pragmaticalness and arrogance of censuring men for any thing, where we have not the law of Christ going before us: For Christ, and not we, or any other man or men in the world, is the sole law-giver in matters of religion: but to censure men for any thing which he hath not thought fit to condemn, or beyond the censure he hath passed upon it, is to usurp his place of a law-giver, and to arraign his law as imperfect and insufficient.

2. Blind and rash judging is also to be guarded against. We should be very careful, that we condemn not men in the dark, or precipitately, before we have clear and reasonable evidence of facts and their circumstances.

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We must not presume to raise suspicions into accusations, or to judge hardly of men merely upon hearsay and common fame, or to take up a report against our neighbour. A judgment ought not to be formed to mens disadvantage, without knowing what they have to say in their own defence. "He that answereth," or determineth "a matter before he heareth it," all that is necessary to give light into it, "it is folly and shame unto him," Prov. xviii. 13. The law of Moses required, that a man should be heard in his own vindication, John vii. 51. "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth?" So Festus mentions it in commendation of the Roman law, Acts xxv. 16. "It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him." And it is the law of Christ, "not to receive an accusation against an elder;" the reason of the thing will suggest the same as to others, that an accusation should not be regarded against any "under two or three witnesses," 1 Tim. v. 19. Certainly justice requires, that such precautions should be taken before private reflections as well as public censures. Wherever we take upon us to be the judges and censors, we should reckon ourselves obliged to obtain good assurance of truth of facts; or else we should be wholly silent and let the matter alone, as none of our business. What a vast number of censures would be stifled in the birth,

birth, if such measures were conscientiously observed?

Another thing deserves consideration upon this head. We shall be guilty of rash judging, if we condemn men without being apprised of the particular circumstances that led them to the actions in question. The same thing may be lawful and even commendable in some circumstances, which in others would be worthy of blame; or at least may deserve a milder censure, if it cannot be wholly vindicated: and we shall judge very rashly, if we make not allowances for the special differences of peoples cases, in judging of their actions. The Pharisess censured Christ's disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, Matt. xii. as if it was a criminal violation of that sacred rest; not considering their hunger, and that such a slight refreshment fitted them for the service of the day, instead of breaking in upon it, and that God will have mercy rather than sacrifice, as our Saviour argues. The circumstances of men in innumerable instances quite alter the moral nature of actions, and in others make a vast difference in degrees of guilt; and he is an unjust and hasty judge, who censures at random, without taking these things into consideration.

3. Partial judging is also forbidden. When either the judgment we form proceeds from pique, or dislike of the person, rather than abhorrence of evil; or when it is not equally extended to all who are equally concerned.

If we should censure others for a thing,

with

with which we are equally chargeable ourselves; though it be really faulty, yet the censure would come very ill from us. It is intolerable to reproach another with drunkenness, or cheating, or idleness, or covetousness, if at the same time you are guilty of the same crimes, Rom. ii. 1. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, dost the same thing." Can you forbear blushing, while you reprove or reproach them upon such an account? And this indeed greatly aggravates any scandals given by magistrates or ministers, by parents or heads of families, or by any whose province or profession it peculiarly is to bear testimony against the sins of others. Upon this account the apostle expostulates with the Jews, who valued themselves upon knowing much more than the Gentiles, and were ready to pass severe censures on them, Rom. ii. 21, &c. "Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou which preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?"

If we censure smaller faults in others with more rigour than we do greater of our own, though they should not be just of the same kind, it is very unjust and unequal. If we are quick at observing, according to our Saviour's allusion, a mote in our brother's eye, but are insensible of a beam in our own; to such Christ addresses in this context, ver. 5. "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out

out the mote out of thy brother's eye." It is odious both to God and man, to animadvert rigorously upon the blemishes of others, when our own character is sullied with blacker stains.

If we censure that strongly in an adversary, which passes for little or nothing in a friend; if that shall be represented as a henious crime in a man we do not like, who follows not with us, or is not of our party, which can be easily overlooked in a favourite or a man attached to us; this is judging with respect of persons, which is a very bad character of a judge.

4. Uncharitable judging is also to be guarded against; all such censures as are not agreeable to the rules that candour and charity would prescribe.

If we give way to suspicions and jealousies of people at random, without any proper foundations to support them. These are the "evil surmisings" spoken of in 1 Tim. iv. 4. Whereas "charity thinketh no evil," till obliged by evidence, 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

When we put the worst construction upon actions, while they will admit of better. The people of Israel were too hasty in this matter with reference to their brethren of the two tribes and a half, who when they were settled on one side of Jordan, built an altar there for a good and lawful end. The other tribes immediately upon the news of it conclude, but too uncharitably, that they had built this altar to turn away from following the Lord; whereas they soon found, that no such thing was intended. The story is in Joshua xxii. There was some zeal for the true religion in these

these resenting tribes, but they put too rigorous and invidious a construction upon an innocent action of their brethren; and it was like to have had ill effects, for they resolved at first "to go up to war against them," ver. 12. But their heat subsided, and they had so much prudence, before they executed their resolution, as to send a deputation to know the truth of the case; who soon found that they had put much too hard an interpretation upon the conduct of their brethren.

If we take upon us to judge of mens thoughts and intentions, while we can find nothing to reproach in their actions. As such censures are pragmatical, so they are highly uncharitable. We should hope their ends and principles are good, when their actions are regular. To insinuate the contrary, is indeed a direct imitation of the devil, who is the most flaming instance upon record of such vile uncharitableness, in the case of Job. God had blessed Job with a course of great prosperity; Satan therefore would insinuate his religion to be entirely mercenary, Job i. 9. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" It was indeed a possible supposition for all that men could know, that Job might not be sincere; but it was a vile suggestion to insinuate that this was fact, when all external appearances were otherwise. So bad a precedent should effectually set every honest man against the imitation of it.

When we venture to judge of mens state and condition in reference to divine acceptance, upon grounds which are not decisive by the express rules of the Gospel; either on account

count of miſtaken opinions in religion, or ſome faults in practice. We know not how far theſe may conſiſt with ſincerity in other people; nor what allowances the great judge of all may ſee fit to make in particular circumſtances, which are obvious to his notice, though they eſcape ours; nor is it any part of our buſineſs to enter into this matter.

If we cenſure men in the lump, as if there was nothing valuable in them; overlooking many commendable excellencies, becauſe of ſome real or ſuppoſed faults in them: this is not charitable. How often is it ſeen, that a man once highly careſſed and commended, ſhall preſently be run down and diſgraced by the ſame perſons, if he happen to differ from them in ſome favoured notion, or even in a point of conduct? All his merits and amiable qualities are forgotten, and all muſt be done to blacken him. This is vile uncharitableneſs.

When we impute to others opinions and conſequences that they diſown. It is very lawful and charitable to endeavour to ſhew men whom we think miſtaken, that ſuch and ſuch conſequences follow from their avowed opinions; this is one proper means to convince them of their error. But it is uncharitable and injurious to charge them with actually holding thoſe very conſequences, when they utterly diſown them, and profeſs that they ſee not their connection with their principles.

To interpret calamities that befal people, as ſpecial judgments of God for ſomething we diſlike in them, without very clear and full

evidence to support such a persuasion, can by no means escape the imputation of uncharitableness. Alas! these constructions are much more frequently the language of passion, and prejudice, and private resentment, than of reason or true religion. The judgments of God are a great deep; and it is very seldom that we can safely pronounce, that God intended to bear testimony against this or that sin of others, in the afflictions that come upon them in the course of his providence.—But angry men serve their purposes by such bold reflections, inflaming others against people whom they dislike by this uncharitable supposition, that they are declared to be hated of God, and that he interests himself in their quarrels. Christ cautions his hearers against forming such dangerous conclusions from the calamities of others, directing them not to think men upon that account greater sinners than their neighbours, Luke xii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

If we are unready to admit fair tokens of repentance even for real faults, this is uncharitable. It is a temper too frequent, if people have done ill things, presently to judge them incurable; if they are seduced into that which we think a dangerous error, to give them over. Whereas at the worst, "charity hopeth all things," 1 Cor. xiii. 7. that "if any are otherwise minded" from what we esteem important truth, if they give us ground in charity to believe their integrity, "God shall reveal even this unto them," Phil. iii. 15. And if men own their faults and mistakes, while uncha-

uncharitable jealouſy may furniſe many objections in the way of crediting them, charity will not enter into ſecret things that belong to God; but gladly "reſtore a man that is overtaken with a fault in the ſpirit of meekneſs."

To publiſh the real faults of others without a juſt occaſion, is carrying our judgment beyond the bounds of charity. If we can hope to reclaim them by private admonition, we ſhould not chuſe to proceed farther to their diſadvantage. To bring them upon the public ſtage, and expoſe them to the cenſure of others, where the welfare of our neighbour or public juſtice do not require it, ſerves no good ends. That which we render charity "beareth all things," 1 Cor. xiii. 7. *πάντα ϛέγει* would be more properly rendered, concealeth all things: Which falls in with St. Peter's obſervation, that "charity covereth a multitude of ſins," 1 Pet iv. 8.

And to add one inſtance more; when innocent people are involved in a cenſure with the guilty, this is a notorious breach of charity. A whole party ſhall ſuffer reproach for the crime of a ſingle man, who happened to bear the ſame name of religious diſtinction with them: or a whole profeſſion ſhall be inſulted for the knavery or unjuſtifiable practices of ſome particular men belonging to it. This method of judging would leave no bounds to cenſoriouſneſs. Every man's faults ſhould be laid at his own door, and be no farther imputed to any other, than as their avowed principles directly juſtify them, or they

they can be proved to be actual confederates in the practice.

II. I proceed to consider the motive by which this prohibition is enforced: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Which is strengthened by an express declaration in ver. 2. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." This may be applied to retaliation either from men or from God.

1. We should not be censorious of others, as ever we would not be served by men in the same kind. They may be faulty indeed in making such returns; but it can hardly be expected, that when other men see that we make free with their characters, they will not make free with ours: they will even think themselves obliged in their own defence to scan our actions more narrowly than they would otherwise do; and very probably in their turn be as rash and uncharitable upon us, as we have been upon them. Divine providence wisely and justly so permits it, that men who fish for scandal, are very often met with in their own way: and it seems to give a general satisfaction, when they are effectually exposed.

2. We should avoid censoriousness, as ever we would escape the judgment of God: For,

(1.) Without repentance we may expect that he will severely animadvert upon this sin in particular. Which upon many accounts may be esteemed a very great and heinous

sin.

ſin. It is a direct invaſion of God's province: either anticipating the work of the great day; on which account the apoſtle exhorts the Corinthians, 1 Epiſt. iv. 5. "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the counſels of the hearts:" Pretend not to judge of things out of the cognizance of men now, and that are deſigned to be ſo till the great day; as the ſecrets of the heart; otherwiſe you will uſurp God's place. Or it is judging men for things wherein they are not at all accountable to us, but to God only; judging his ſervants in things which concern none but their maſter and themſelves: As in matters which he hath left indifferent, or which neither the good of ſociety, nor the appointment of God require to be called before any human tribunal. "Who art thou that judgeſt another's ſervant? to his own maſter he ſtandeth or falleth," Rom. xiv. 4. "Why doſt thou judge or ſet at nought thy brother? for we ſhall all ſtand before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt," ver. 10. And "every one of us ſhall give an account of himſelf to God," ver. 12. In ſuch matters, as the apoſtle is there ſpeaking of, every man is to give account of himſelf to God, but men have no right to call one another to account: therefore to judge another in thoſe things, is to thruſt ourſelves into God's province. And will not God, think you, chaſtiſe ſuch arrogance? it is alſo very injurious to our neighbour. Evil ſurmiſes of him weaken our own affection; and if we

ſpread them abroad may leſſen his reputation with others, and draw many pernicious conſequences after them; for which we ſhall be juſtly accountable, as long as they ſpring from a ſinful action of ours, and ſuch effects might be foreſeen likely to enſue. And we may add to all the reſt; that it is a practice wherein we cannot but be ſelf-condemned, if we reflect how we ſhould reſent the like treatment in our own caſe. Every man inveighs at unjuſt cenſures, when he feels the laſh of them: and may not the judge of all be reaſonably expected, if we ſhould "ſo ſmite our fellow-ſervants," to ſay, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked ſervant?"

(2.) We may expect that God will proceed with rigour in judging our offences againſt him, if we are rigid cenſors of our neighbours. We can have no reaſon to complain, if God ſhould treat us according to the meaſures we obſerve to others. He will never indeed exceed the meaſures of juſtice, however we act; he will not retaliate in his proceedings; but if we allow uncharitableneſs, we are to expect no mercy, Jam. ii. 13. "He ſhall have judgment without mercy, that hath hath ſhewed no mercy." And what then muſt become of us? If God be ſtrict to mark all our real iniquities, can we ſtand? Can we anſwer him for one of a thouſand of our actions? The uncharitable are excluded from any hope of the benefit of Goſpel grace. God grant then that we may have mercy on ourſelves, by being more merciful in our cenſures of others.

I might

I might now in the close of this subject pursue such reflections as these:

That this is one remarkable instance of "godliness, having the promise of this life and that which is to come;" that there is in particular an ordinary connexion between charitable judging on our part, and mild and gentle censures from others in the world; and that those who throw about censures at random, commonly meet with very cutting returns: And especially that great regard will be had in the future judgment of God to men's present conduct in this matter.

That the neglect of this precept is a melancholy instance, how little true Christianity is practised among those who profess it; when this notorious vice of uncharitable judging prevails so much every where.

But I chuse rather to shut up this discourse with some proper directions for guarding us against a censorious spirit.

Let it be a settled resolution with us to maintain a good opinion of every man in particular till we are obliged by evidence to quit it. This is a duty we owe to God and man; and our suspicions, especially our reflections, should never out-run or exceed the discovery men make of themselves.

Often recollect the evils included in censoriousness, and that are used to attend it. That it arrogates divine prerogatives, is a constant act of injustice to our neighbour, and a plain violation of the golden rule of doing to others as we would be done unto. And besides the retaliations to be feared from the resentment

of

of men and the righteous judgment of God for it, there is one thing fit to be often thought of by an ingenious mind; that in the ſerious review of our ſpirits and actions, conſcience will never reproach us for having admitted too favourable an opinion of any man, but we ſhall always have reaſon to blame ourſelves, when we find that we thought too hardly of him.

We ſhould carefully avoid and mortify the uſual incentives to this temper. Idleneſs and want of good employment often leads people to this vile practice; many ſet up for judges of others, becauſe they have nothing elſe to do. Selfiſhneſs and pride are common principles of cenſoriouſneſs; men think too highly of themſelves, and are ſtrongly tenacious of their own intereſts; and imagining other people to ſtand in the way of their reputation or advantage, they know not how to leſſen them but by detraction and uncharitable cenſures. Violent attachment to a party is very often the parent of this crime. The charity of ſome, like that of the Jews of old, is confined to thoſe of their own way; and ſo they give themſelves an unconſcionable liberty to expoſe and blacken other people. This party-zeal has in every age been the foundation of the greateſt exceſſes. Whereas if we would but enlarge the community of love, as our maſter has taught us to do to all mankind; and our brotherly love to all that hold the head; this would extinguiſh the deſire of cenſure.

We ſhould eſpecially think frequently of the

the number and greatneſs of our faults, and our need of allowances both from God and men. If we are not ſtrangers at home, it is certain we are privy to many more irregularities and defects of our own, than we can be of any other man: if we are not conſcious of the ſame enormous ſins as ſome publicly commit; yet we muſt be ſenſible of very many particulars which will not bear a ſtrict ſcrutiny, but need gracious indulgence from the bleſſed God daily: Let us judge ourſelves for theſe, and we ſhall be very tender in judging others. We cannot but diſcern many parts of our conduct, which are capable of an ill conſtruction by other men, though we ſhould be conſcious of our own honeſt intention in them. How ſhould we complain, if our neighbours ſhould take them by the worſt handle? Let us then not do ſo by them; but judge favourably and charitably, leſt we alſo be tempted.

Finally, think often, how gentle and long-ſuffering God has been to us already; and that if he enter into judgment with us, we can have no hope for eternity: but that if we judge ourſelves impartially, and our neighbours charitably, we ſhall not be judged.

SER-

SERMON XV.

SINCERITY.

2 COR. v. 8. the latter part.

——But with the unleavened bread of ſincerity and truth.

THE apoſtle had in the ſeventh verſe repreſented Chriſt as our paſſover, ſacrificed for us: That is, in his becoming a ſacrifice for us, he reſembled the paſchal lambs, which were ſlain by the Iſraelites in Egypt. When God was about to accompliſh the deliverance of his people out of the houſe of bondage, and Pharaoh was unwilling to let them go, God inflicted many judgments upon Egypt; and after others, appointed a deſtroying angel to paſs through the land, and to ſlay all the firſt-born in every houſe, from the royal palace down to the meaneſt family. But he was pleaſed, in order to make a gracious diſtinction in the caſe of the Iſraelites from that of the Egyptians, to appoint them to ſlay a lamb for every houſe and to ſprinkle the blood of it upon the ſide-poſts, and upon the upper door-poſt of their houſes; promiſing, that upon ſight of the blood, the deſtroying angel ſhould paſs over and ſpare their families. Thus, while divine vengeance was hanging over the heads of ſinners, God ſent his own Son

Son to ſhed his blood as a ſacrifice; in virtue of which, thoſe on whom it is ſprinkled, who are entitled to the benefit of it according to the Goſpel-conſtitution, ſhall be graciouſly ſpared and paſſed over by God.

St. Paul having thus repreſented Chriſt as our paſchal lamb, goes on to preſs the duty of Chriſtians in language alluding to the Jewiſh paſſover.

The Jews kept a feſtival throughout all their generations, in thankful remembrance of this great and gracious deliverance. *So*, ſays he, *let us* Chriſtians *keep the feaſt.*

And it was a circumſtance very particularly enjoined in the celebration of the paſſover, that they ſhould eat it "with unleavened bread." The Hebrew word, *Matſoth*, which is ſo rendered, ſtrictly imports as much as *pure and ſincere* bread, that is, unmixed with leaven. In alluſion to this, the apoſtle exhorts Chriſtians to keep the feaſt with a qualification that anſwers to that figure. As the Iſraelites were to remove leaven out of their houſes before the paſſover: ſo we ſhould lay aſide "the old leaven," the "leaven of malice and wickedneſs," all ſorts of known ſin, either in corrupt affection or ſinful practice; and keep the feaſt "with the unleavened bread of ſincerity and truth." Chriſt himſelf warns his diſciples againſt hypocriſy, under the ſame alluſion of leaven, Luke xii. 1. "He began to ſay unto his diſciples firſt of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Phariſees, which is hypocriſy."

We may underſtand the apoſtle, by the phraſe

phraſe of *keeping the feaſt*, to have the Lord's ſupper particularly in his eye; which is to Chriſtians juſt ſuch a commemorative ſign of the ſacrifice of Chriſt, as all the Jewiſh paſſovers in after-ages were of that in Egypt. And ſo the text would be a direction to us for the frame which is eſpecially neceſſary in obſerving that particular feſtival.

But I apprehend, with the general ſtream of interpreters, that the apoſtle had not his eye ſo much to that ordinance in particular, as to a chriſtian courſe in general, correſpondent to the Jewiſh paſſover. As if he had ſaid, "Let "your whole lives be like their paſſover, an "exerciſe of praiſe, and ſervice, and obedi- "ence to God, as it becomes thoſe who are "redeemed by Chriſt from ſo great evils and "by ſo great a price; but then ſee that all be "done with the unleavened bread of ſincerity "and truth."

After all that has been ſaid of the chriſtian temper, in the general characters of it, and in the principal branches of which it conſiſts; I would in the laſt place conſider ſome qualifications which ſhould run through every branch of the chriſtian temper: And this paſſage is a proper foundation for diſcourſing on that with which I chuſe to begin, *ſincerity*; for it is here recommended as a property requiſite in the whole of our chriſtian obedience.

In the proſecution of it, I would ſhew, I. The nature of *Goſpel-ſincerity*. And II. Our engagements to ſee that this be a qualification of all the exerciſes of the chriſtian temper and life.

I. Let

I. Let us inquire in the nature of Gospel-sincerity.

Two words are used in the text, I apprehend, to signify much the same thing. The former, translated *sincerity*, is as much as to say, a thing which may be best judged of in clear sunshine.* A counterfeit will not bear the light; but that which is true will: Such is sincerity. Or it may be an allusion to the judgment passed upon grain, when it is winnowed; whereby that which is valuable, is separated from the rest. † Sincerity will bear sifting, and will appear the better for it. The other word ‡ signifies *reality*, in opposition to that which is feigned or a mere appearance. And when sincerity and truth is recommended by the emblem of unleavened bread, or pure and unmixed bread, it denotes *simplicity*; which we find joined with *godly-sincerity*, 2 Cor. i. 12. The word translated *simplicity* §, signifies being without folds, a metaphor that intimates an open and undisguised behaviour. It was the character of Jacob, that he was "a plain man," Gen. xxv. 27. The Greek version imports * a man not formed or shaped, that is, to serve a turn. Sincerity is the same thing, which the Scripture so often expresses by *uprightness*; and is opposed to *guile and hypocrisy*, which we are called to *lay aside*, 1 Pet. ii. 1. The description of the blessed man is given from his sincerity, Psal. xxxii. 2. "In whose spi-

* Εἰλικρινία, qu. τῇ εἵλῃ κρινόμενον. *Constantin. Lex.*

† Παρὰ τὸ κρίνεσθαι τῷ εἰλεῖν seu εἰλεῖσθαι. *Notæ in Hesychium*, edit. 1668. ‡ Ἀλήθεια. § Ἁπλότης.

* Ἁπλαστον.

rit there is no guile." And so is Nathanael's, John i. 47. "An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."

Now religious sincerity will comprehend in it the following particulars.

1. A single intention and aim to please God and approve ourselves to him through our whole course. That it is our principal study to be well-accepted with him, before all other considerations, and above all other motives of acting; and that we resolve to conduct ourselves chiefly, and in bar to any thing else, by the hope of his favour and the fear of his displeasure. This is meant by having "the eye single," Luke xi. 34. To which a "double minded man" stands opposed, Jam. i. 8. who has some desire to please God, but is in suspence between that and the other motives of acting; the balance now turns one way and then another: It is truly said concerning such a man, that he "is unstable in all his ways." But the basis of sincerity is this, that "whatever we do, we do it unto the Lord, and not to men," Col. iii. 23. As far as we suffer ourselves to be swayed by other considerations more than by a regard to God, and especially when we are carried away by other inducements to run the risque of losing his favour, and falling under his displeasure: so far a breach is made upon Gospel-sincerity; whether it be the pleasing of other men, or the advancement of our own worldly interest, that is set up in competition with him, and allowed a preference before him.

We are indeed allowed, not only to aim at our

our own ſpiritual and eternal advantage, which is inſeparably connected with the pleaſing of God; but alſo at our temporal intereſt, whenever it will not interfere with our duty; and at the pleaſing of men, when we can have a proſpect of reaching that end with a ſafe conſcience. But if either of theſe is made our main aim, or is purſued at the known hazard of offending God; if we ſeek to pleaſe ourſelves or other men at this expence, "we are not the ſervants of Chriſt," Gal. i. 10. Sincerity is wanting, as far as a concern to pleaſe him hath not the pre-eminence.

Not that we can actually be ſuppoſed to form this intention in every particular action we do. In many caſes it is ſufficient that this deſign be habitual. In actions, where there is no ſuſpicion of evil, a man may act with full ſincerity, though there be not a direct and expreſs regard had to God therein. But wherever there is deliberation, when there hath been a doubt and ſtruggle, whether we ought or ought not to do a thing; there an actual intention to pleaſe God, and to perform our duty, is neceſſary to ſincerity.

2. An impartial inquiry into our duty is an eſſential part of ſincerity. That having fixed it for our aim above all things to pleaſe God, we diligently apply ourſelves to the uſe of all proper and appointed means, according to our capacities, to diſcover his mind and will, "how we ought to walk and to pleaſe God," 1 Theſſ. iv. 1. Sincerity conſiſts not with a raſhneſs of acting; or a negligence in enquiry; but neceſſarily implies a hearty de-

deſire

desire to "know what is the good and acceptable will of the Lord." A sincere man is willing to discover his master's will, though it should happen to contradict the sentiments of which he is most firmly persuaded at present, or the practices of which hitherto he hath been most tenacious; and ready to change his mind or his course upon conviction.

He not only cannot satisfy himself to shut his eyes against light, when it is offered him, but diligently applies himself to the means of information. He will consult the dictates of his own mind, and carefully search the word of God, and gladly embrace any opportunity by which he may be assisted to understand the meaning of it better. He is desirous to be free from prejudice and prepossessions that might give him a wrong bias, and hinder him from the admission of light and proper evidence from whatever quarter, and by whatever means it is offered him. And therefore, as conscious of his own liableness to mistake, and how easy it is to have latent prejudices of which a man may not be particularly sensible at the time, he often applies to God by earnest prayer, that he would be his guide and teacher, and would relieve him by his grace against every sinful bias and wrong impression or influence he may be under. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" is the frequent language of his heart: "What I know not, teach thou me." He sets himself to prove all things as he hath opportunity; to consider and make the most impartial judgment that he can upon the means of information.

tion. And as ſenſible of his continuing imperfection, he ſtill follows on to know the Lord, and would ever remain open to light. This of upright inquiry is a great branch of ſincerity.

It is obſervable that Nathanael had that illuſtrious character given by Chriſt, of being "an Iſraelite indeed, in whom was no guile," upon his diſcovering himſelf to be an impartial inquirer. He had as yet no actual knowledge of Chriſt. Upon Philip's telling him, John i. 45. "We have found him of whom Moſes in the law and the prophets did write, Jeſus of Nazareth:" Nathanael, like a man careful not to be deceived in a matter of the greateſt importance, as this was, whether Jeſus was the promiſed Meſſiah, honeſtly propoſes an objection which ſtarted in his mind upon what Philip had ſaid; "Can any good thing," ſays he, "come out of Nazareth?" ver. 46. Either the meanneſs of the place, or the bad character of the inhabitants, might lead him to ſuſpect it. Or he might be prepoſſeſſed with the ſame miſtaken ſentiment, which ſome teachers of the law expreſſed in John vii. 52. that "no prophet could come out of Gallilee." Or perhaps he underſtood Philip to mean, that Jeſus was born in Nazareth; and then knowing with the reſt of the Jews, from Micah's prophecy, that Chriſt was to be born in Bethlehem, till he was ſet right in this fact, he could not yet get over the objection. Philip, without ſtanding to anſwer him, it may be without being able to do it, becauſe he was yet but a young diſ-

ciple, preſſes Nathanael to come and ſee; to go along with him and converſe with Chriſt, that he might make a trial himſelf whether there was not reaſon to think the ſame of Chriſt that Philip did. Nathanael, like a truly upright and conſcientious man, as he would not take ſo great a matter upon truſt without evidence; ſo on the other hand he would not neglect an opportunity of better information, when he was ſo fairly led to it; but goes along with Philip to Jeſus. And no ſooner was come within hearing, but before any converſation has paſt, Chriſt receives him with this encomium; "Behold an Iſraelite indeed, in whom there is no guile:" Wherein our Lord eminently fixes this character upon an impartial inquirer after truth. As if he had ſaid, "Thou haſt acted like an honeſt and "ſincere man, both in the objections thou "haſt ſtarted againſt me, and in coming to "make a farther trial. Thou didſt without "favour of affection ſay of me what thou "thoughteſt agreeable to Scripture; and yet "upon Philip's invitation art come to in-"quire whether thou canſt diſcover any "thing more certain. Thou haſt neither "ſhewn a raſh credulity, in taking me for "the Meſſiah without proper evidence; nor "an unperſuadable obſtinacy in refuſing to "uſe the means in thy power for better in-"formation. This is worthy of a ſincere "man."

3. An entire and univerſal application to the practice of duty as far as it is known, without ſtated and allowed reſerves and exceptions.

ceptions. Sincerity comprehends integrity in it, or making conſcience of the whole compaſs of known duty.

If our governing end be to pleaſe God, we ſhall as carefully purſue that end, where we have only that motive, as where there are other conſiderations likely to influence, beſide the pleaſing of God. And really there is no trial of our ſincere and impartial regard to God, more clear and deciſive than this, to obſerve how we ſtand affected to thoſe parts of religion, to which God and our own conſciences alone are privy. For inſtance,

We ſhall be as careful about the exerciſe of every grace and virtue in the inward frame and temper of the heart, as in the viſible actions that ſhould flow from it. A hypocrite is ſatisfied to "make clean the outſide of the cup and of the platter; though within he be full of extortion and exceſs," Matth. xxiii. 25. But ſincerity will concern itſelf about the inward diſpoſition; in mortifying the "thought of fooliſhneſs," as well as the fruit of it in life; and in cultivating a right temper of ſoul to God and man, as well as a blameleſs outward behaviour to both. A ſincere man will bewail the ſins that go no farther than thought, if he is conſcious that his heart gave in to them, though the conception ſhould by ſome means or other prove abortive: And both in his devotions to God, and his tranſactions with men, he will be ſolicitous not only to eſcape the cenſure of men, but that the actions they are ready to commend, flow from an outward principle; and that diſpoſi-

tions

tions be not wanting in the heart correſpondent to all the "light ſhewn before men."

For the ſame reaſon ſincerity will engage to equal care in private conduct, as when we are upon the public ſtage. It will not allow a man to be a libertine in ſecret, as long as he appears in open view a man of probity and virtue; nor to be an atheiſt at home, while he wears the maſk of a ſaint abroad; nor to be in readineſs to practiſe a baſe trick, when he can hope for concealment, while he appears accurately juſt in caſes where he knows he is ſtrictly obſerved. An upright man makes conſcience of owning God in his family and his cloſet, as well as of public worſhip; and will be as careful to maintain life and ſerioufneſs in the one as in the other. It is probable, that Chriſt points at ſomething of this nature in Nathanael's caſe, when he tells him, "Before that Philip called thee when thou waſt under the fig-tree, I ſaw thee," John i. 48. Poſſibly he was there in retirement, engaged in holy meditation and devotion; and Chriſt lets him know that when he was there alone, out of the reach of any human eye, he ſaw and obſerved him. It is plain, that ſome private tranſaction of importance paſſed there, becauſe Nathanael declares himſelf immediately to be convinced of Chriſt's extraordinary character, from his being able to give him a hint of this; and it is equally plain, that it was ſome good thing that had been done in private, becauſe Chriſt, inſtead of reproving him for it, produces this as an additional evidence, that he had not ſpoke at random in pronouncing

pronouncing him an Iſraelite indeed. The reaſon why a ſincere man is the ſame in private as in public, is in truth becauſe he never thinks himſelf alone, but always in the preſence of God, as well as of his own conſcience; and that conſideration has principal weight with him.

And ſincerity diſpoſes to pay an indiſcriminate regard to God's authority; or an equal reſpect to it in all caſes where we can diſcover it: That it be allowed to command and ſway the whole man; ſo that we are willing to receive any thing for truth upon his teſtimony, and any thing for law upon the ſignification of his will; and to conſecrate all that we have and are to his ſervice without reſerve. It is a falſe and diſſembled reſpect to God, if we conſent not to be at his direction univerſally and without exception; if we *count* not *all his precepts concerning all things to be right, and hate* not *every falſe way*, Pſal. cxix. 128. I ſay not that any man performs actually perfect, unſinning obedience; but that it is inconſiſtent with goſpel-ſincerity to have a fixed and known exception againſt any particular branch of duty, or in ſtated favour of any irregular habit or inclination, which we are convinced to be ſuch.

4. A correſpondence and harmony between inward ſentiments and the words and actions, is neceſſary to conſtitute ſincerity.

This muſt be maintained in the affairs of religion, if we would approve ourſelves to be ſincere. It will forbid us to profeſs or act any thing in matters of belief or worſhip, different.

ferent from the inward perſuaſion of our minds. The charge which the apoſtle Paul lays upon Peter, is obſervable to this purpoſe, Gal. ii. 11——14. "When Peter was come to Antioch, I withſtood him to the face, becauſe he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew, and ſeparated himſelf, fearing them which were of the circumciſion. And the other Jews diſſembled likewiſe with him, inſomuch that Barnabas alſo was carried away with the diſſimulation. But I ſaw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Goſpel." The caſe was this; Peter was perſuaded that it was a truth of the Goſpel, that that there was no difference to be made between thoſe who embraced chriſtianity, whether they received circumciſion or not: He was one of the firſt of the Jewiſh converts, whom God took care in the moſt ſolemn manner to convince of this truth, in the caſe of Cornelius, Acts x. He had acted for a time agreeable to this ſentiment, converſing freely with the converted Gentiles, without any regard to the ceremonial diſtinction of meats: But when ſome converted Jews, who were tenacious of the law of Moſes, came down where he was, leſt he ſhould offend thoſe bigots, he withdrew from the Gentile converts, as if they were unfit for the free ſociety of Chriſtians of the circumciſion: And this had ſuch an influence, as to carry other Jewiſh converts, even Barnabas himſelf, to the ſame dividing practice. This St. Paul calls "diſſimulation,

not

not walking uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel;" and declares, that Peter was to be blamed for it. And without doubt it was an intrenching upon christian sincerity; seeming to profess, contrary to his inward persuasion, that ceremonial distinctions were yet in force, when he knew that they were abolished. The Gospel, we see, will not countenance an action that in fair construction is repugnant to our principles; much less will it allow us to make a contrary profession.

And the same honest agreement between our words and hearts should run through our behaviour to men. As far as we are conducted by sincerity, we shall not pretend to friendship, where really we have none; nor make promises of kindness where none is intended; nor act an unfriendly part behind mens backs, after professions of regard and respect to their faces. Especially we shall not make pretence of friendship, on purpose to have the greater advantage for imposing on men; or use crafty insinuations to draw things from them in the freedom of discourse, on design of divulging those very things afterwards to their disadvantage. Sincerity requires fair and open dealing in all our concerns with them. But this last hath been the subject of a particular discourse already.*

II. I am to shew, of what importance it is that this qualification should attend us in all the exercises of the christian temper and duty.

1. It is expressly required by divine precept

* See Vol. II. Ser. xiii.

in

in the several branches of our duty. The new man in general, which christianity teaches us to put on, is *after God created in* true *holiness*, Eph. iv. 24. The first and great commandment, of godliness, is thus prescribed, Matt. xxii. 37. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Josh. xxiv. 14. "Fear the Lord, and serve him, in sincerity and truth." And the Gospel eminently inculcates the same thing. "The hour cometh, and now is," says Christ of the evangelical dispensation, which was then beginning to dawn, "when the true worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and in truth; for the father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," John iv. 23, 24. And this is the first thing pressed upon Christians in their approaches to God, Heb. x. 22. "Let us draw near with a true heart." The *love to Christ*, upon which we can hope for divine *grace with us*, must be *in sincerity*, Eph. vi. 24. And the same qualification is insisted on in our love to our neighbour, 1 John iii. 18. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Thus, *he that giveth* in acts of charity, is required to do it *with simplicity*, with integrity, and unfeigned affection, Rom. xii. 8. and ver. 9. "Let your love be without dissimulation." The same temper should be carried into every relation, and attend the performance of all our relative duties; as it is particularly mentioned in the case of servants, Eph. vi. 5.

vi. 5. "Servants be obedient,—in ſingleneſs of heart, as unto Chriſt."

2. It is indiſpenſably neceſſary to our acceptance with God. How can that be expected to meet with a favourable regard from God, which was not in intention done to him? Nor can any perſuaſion or practice how agreeable ſoever it may be in itſelf to the rule, be a *faith* that *gives glory to God*, or *the obedience of faith*, which is not the fruit of honeſt and impartial inquiry into the mind of God. Indeed it is not the homage of a reaſonable creature, or of a Chriſtian; but a raſh and bold adventure, that ſhews little of a conſcientious concern whether we be right or wrong, and might have happened the one way as well as the other. Partial obedience cannot be founded upon an upright regard to God's authority, Jam. ii. 10. *Whoſoever ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point*, that is, live in ſtated diſregard of one known command, *is guilty of all*; that is of contemning the authority upon which it is built. The apoſtle adds the reaſon, ver. 11. "For he that ſaid Do not commit adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not kill, now if thou commit not adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a tranſgreſſor of the law." The ſame holds good in any other precept. And to expect the acceptance of only outward regards, while the heart is wanting, is an argument of high contempt of God, as if either he had not knowledge to diſcover, or holineſs to deteſt vile hypocriſy. Whereas that is ſo much abhorred by God, that *the portion of hypocrites*

expreſſes the ſevereſt puniſhment, Matt. xxiv. 51. Such only have their ſins pardoned now, "in whoſe ſpirit there is no guile," Pſal. xxxii. 2. And they only will have them all "blotted out, when times of refreſhing ſhall come from the preſence of the Lord:" And therefore the apoſtle prays for the Philippians, "that they might be ſincere and without offence till the day of Chriſt," Phil. i. 10. Goſpel ſincerity will appear to be of the greateſt conſequence in the judgment-day.

3. This qualification alone can adminiſter ſolid ſatisfaction to ourſelves upon reflection. If men could always diſcern hypocriſy, they would deteſt it; but this may be out of the cognizance of creatures. One man may poſſibly reach his ends with another by a diſguiſe; but how low and empty a ſatisfaction will that produce, if he cannot be ſatisfied from himſelf? So the truly good man alone is, Prov. xiv. 24. Conſcioufneſs of his own ſincerity will be a perpetual feaſt to him. "Our rejoicing is this," ſays St. Paul, "the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our converſation in the world;" 2 Cor. i. 12. If our conſciences can bear us this teſtimony, it will be a ſpring of joy within ourſelves that depends not upon other peoples eſtimation: We "ſhall have rejoicing in ourſelves alone, and not in another," Gal. vi. 4. It will be a peace that no man can take away; and which will give comfort and confidence toward God. "We

ſhall

ſhall aſſure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God," 1 John iii. 19—21. We may then entertain a juſt aſſurance of his favour and acceptance, and have the greateſt freedom and hope in all our applications to him; as it follows, ver. 22. "And whatſoever we aſk, we receive of him, becauſe we keep his commandments, and do thoſe things that are pleaſing in his ſight." Happy they are now, in every condition, who can appeal to God and conſcience for their integrity; while the hypocrite muſt ever be either afraid or aſhamed of himſelf.

4. Sincerity will be the eaſieſt method of conduct. What art and pains are needful to wear a diſguiſe tolerably? It is uneaſy to a man, while he wears it; and odds, that upon ſome opportunity he throws it off, and ſhews himſelf in his proper colours. When the heart is one way, and the behaviour another, under ſome preſent unnatural influence, the reſtraint muſt be unpleaſant, and maintained with difficulty: and therefore the beſt way to ſecure in all weathers the appearance of piety, and purity, and charity, and of every virtue, is to make ſure of a hearty diſpoſition to be what we would ſeem to be.

5. Herein we ſhall copy after the moſt illuſtrious and excellent examples. By this the ſaints enrolled in the records of Scripture, where the Spirit of God hath embalmed their names, "obtained a good report." This was the

the glory of Noah and Job, that they were upright men; and of the excellent of the earth, in their several generations, who have finished their course well, and whose end was peace, Psal. xxxvii. 37.

But above all, the Lord Jesus shone in this character. He was most sincere in pursuing the pleasing of God as his governing aim; so that he could say, "I do always those things that please him," John viii. 29. He executed every thing which was given him in charge, without exception or reserve; fulfilling all righteousness; performing every thing which was the duty of the human nature as such; submitting to all the ceremonial observances, which were of divine appointment, and remained in force during the Jewish œconomy; and completely discharging all that was incumbent on him by virtue of the peculiar law of the Mediator. So impartial and universal was his obedience, that he could solemnly appeal to his Father at the close, John xvii. 4. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And as "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," 1 Pet. ii. 22. This is observed concerning him, where the apostle particularly represents him as going before us, "shewing us an example," ver. 21.

Insincerity on the other hand is most directly the image of the devil, that false and lying spirit, who from his craft and deceitfulness is called the "old serpent," and represented as assuming all shapes and disguises to carry on his designs; sometimes "transforming himself into an angel of light," full of cunning and subtilty,

ſubtilty, of wiles and ſtratagems. This view, which the Scripture gives of the ſpirits of darkneſs, ſhould ſtrongly poſſeſs our ſouls with the deformity and vileneſs of an inſincere temper and behaviour.

The ſubject we have been upon, may very fitly be applied various ways.

1. As a ſubject of ſorrow for the evident violations of ſincerity among thoſe who wear the name of Chriſtians. Indeed we cannot without arrogance pretend to fix the charge of hypocriſy upon any man, as long as he maintains a fair and regular appearance: Every man, eſpecially every Chriſtian, ſhould be very careful, that he aſſume not the province of God, the ſearcher of hearts, by arraigning or ſuſpecting other mens ſincerity, when they ſeem religious in the judgment of charity. But without entering into the ſecret things which belong to God, too many flagrant inſtances of inſincerity may be obſerved and lamented every day. How often is a pretence of religion evidently made to ſerve the deſign of defrauding men? What tricking arts are practiſed under the maſque of friendſhip? Such things as theſe, which often come to open light, may juſtly be the grief of ſerious Chriſtians, who know the value of ſincerity in itſelf, and how contrary every breach of it is to the obligations of chriſtianity.

2. As a meaſure of judging ourſelves, whether we are in a ſtate of acceptance with God. Here we may and ought to enter into the cloſeſt ſcrutiny of ſincerity. We are privy to what paſſes within ourſelves, though we can-

not reach the secrets of others hearts. Conscience is the candle of the Lord within us, to enable us to discern the real state of our own case. Let us therefore bring ourselves within the light and judgment of our own consciences, upon this most important inquiry, whether we are sincere or not? Whether the pleasing of God is our ordinary and prevailing design and aim? Whether universal obedience to all the known will of God is our stated aim, and resolution, and endeavour? Whether there be an agreement between our hearts, and our words and actions? Another man cannot decide these questions for us, upon which our acceptance with God depends. But God knows how the matter stands, and we may discern it; and it is of the utmost importance that we pass a right judgment ourselves.

3. As a ground of humiliation to the best for the defects of their sincerity, as well as in every particular branch of goodness. Sincerity, as prescribed by the rule, is to be considered as perfect; as well as the particular graces and virtues, of which it is a qualification: that is, every failure in any of the articles wherein sincerity consists, is as contrary to sincerity, and as truly a breach of our duty, as every degree of doubting is contrary to faith, or any violation of truth to veracity. And though the grace of the Gospel admits of prevailing sincerity as the term of life, as well as of the prevalence of other graces and virtues; yet a Christian has reason to humble himself before God for the defects of his sincerity, as well as of every other fruit of the Spirit.

Spirit. Though we can entertain hope that we have been prevailingly ſincere, yet who ſhall dare to ſay upon recollection, that he hath been perfectly ſincere? That his intention and deſign to pleaſe God has been ſo entire, that he hath never deviated from it? That he has enquired into the mind of God with as much diligence and impartiality, as he might and ought to have done? That his obedience has been unreſerved and univerſal as it might have been? That he hath never been guilty of the leaſt diſſimulation or falſe diſguiſe? Now, though we may have good reaſon to hope for divine acceptance according to the grace of the Goſpel, upon the conſciouſneſs of ſincerity in a prevailing degree; yet we ſhould confeſs and bewail every known defect in it, in our temper or conduct, either to God or man.

4. As an engagement to cultivate and advance in this excellent qualification.

How greatly would this bleſſed end be promoted, if we would think at every turn, of the eye of the great God upon us; that we are wholly naked and open to him with whom we have to do? If we would frequently place ourſelves by faith and ſerious meditation at the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be revealed? If we conſider how high ſincerity ſtands in divine eſtimation, how valuable it is to all men as far as they can diſcern it, and what ſatisfaction it will produce in our breaſts.

Let us then ſtudiouſly mind and practiſe it as the principal thing in all the ſeeming good

we do; either in the acts of piety to God, or of justice and charity to men.

Particularly whenever we keep the Gospel-feast of the holy supper, let not this qualification be wanting. It is the great thing requisite in every communicant; the wedding-garment, without which we cannot be welcome guests. And it should attend every part of our work at that solemnity. We should be sincere in the reasons and ends of observing it, that it be done in pure obedience to our master's will, and in hope of that spiritual benefit for which it was appointed. In the exercise of those dispositions which should attend the remembrance of a dying Saviour; such a thankfulness for the love of God in the work of our redemption; sorrow for sin, which should be excited by this evidence of its evil nature; and faith in the promises of God which are ratified in Christ's blood. In our desire of the blessings offered us in virtue of his blood. In our resolutions of new obedience. And in our charity and affection to our fellow-Christians.

We have there the highest instance of undissembled love set in view, faithful promises sealed on God's part. We are immediately transacting with him who can judge of sincerity; and without it, instead of receiving advantage by that holy institution, shall eat and drink judgment to ourselves.

SER-

SERMON XVI.

Constancy and Perseverance.

1 COR. xv. 58. former part.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

NEXT to sincerity, and indeed as very closely connected with it, fixedness or steadiness may properly be considered as a general qualification, which ought to run through every branch of the christian temper.

The apostle in this chapter explains and proves at large the doctrine of the resurrection: A most comfortable and encouraging doctrine to every sincere Christian, under the present difficulties which attend his pilgrimage; and in prospect of death approaching, whether in the usual course of nature, or to be undergone for the testimony of Jesus. Upon this refreshing revelation, the apostle grafts the exhortation in the text. From the promised rewards he excites Christians to attend to their present work. Seeing they have reason to look for a glorious and happy resurrection from the Lord Jesus, they should mind the work of the Lord now: By which we are to understand the whole work and duty which our master prescribes us by the way.

There-

There are two qualifications of our chriſtian obedience which are here recommended: The one is ſteadineſs, and the other abounding in this work. For the laſt, that we ſhould do our utmoſt, and make the higheſt advances we can therein, there will be occaſion to conſider it under another qualification yet to be diſcourſed of: namely *chriſtian zeal*.

That which is to be our preſent ſubject, is ſtedfaſtneſs and unmoveableneſs in the work of the Lord. Two words near akin in their ſignification are uſed to expreſs one and the ſame thing with the greater emphaſis: The former[a] is an alluſion to a man ſeated, ſet down in a ſettled poſture, in oppoſition to a man that is moving about and unfixed: The other word[b] directly expreſſes what is imported by that metaphor, unmoveable. The ſame apoſtle, writing to the Coloſſians, chap. i. 23. expreſſes ſtadfaſtneſs in the faith by both words, with the addition of a third. [c]If ye continue in the faith, grounded, or fixed upon a ſolid foundation; and ſettled, or ſtedfaſt, and not moved away from the hope of the Goſpel.

I am to proſecute this truth,

That ſtedfaſtneſs in the graces and duties required of us, is a neceſſary qualification of the chriſtian temper.

a Ἕδραῖοι ab ἕδρα, ſella, quod ab ἕζομαι ſedeo.

b Ἀμετακίνητοι. c Εἰγε ἐπιμένετε ἐν πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἑδραῖοι, καὶ μὴ μετακινέμενοι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τε εὐαγγελίου.

Where

Where I shall, I. Explain this qualification. And, II. Shew the necessity of it.

I. For explaining the qualification, it may be observed, that it includes two things in it. 1. That the exercise of grace and duty be habitual and constant, in opposition to that which is merely occasional, or by fits and starts. That it be persisted in to the end of life, in opposition to apostacy.

1. The christian temper and course must be habitual and constant, in opposition to that which is merely occasional, or by fits and starts. It is not enough that we now and then attend to religion; but the ordinary bent of our spirits must run this way, and customary practice correspond with it. We should live soberly, righteously and godly; that is, it should be the stated and even course of our lives, what we are fixedly designing and pursuing.

Indeed such a constancy in our christian obedience as is absolutely perfect, and denotes an entire freedom from sin, is not what the Gospel insists upon. Experience and Scripture too, shew this to be impossible and impracticable in the present life. "There is no man that liveth and sinneth not," 1 Kings viii. 46. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not," Eccl. vii. 20. "How should a man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand," Job ix. 2, 3. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?" Prov. xx. 9. No man can, and therefore the Psalmist makes that

that acknowledgement and prayer, Pſal. xix. 12. "Who can underſtand his errors? cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults." The New Teſtament plainly affirms the ſame thing of Chriſtians. Jam. iii. 2. "In many things we all offend." 1 John i. 8. "If we ſay we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us." St. Paul pretended "not to have already attained, or to be already perfect," Phil. iii. 12. And therefore the diſciples of Chriſt are directed in the Lord's-prayer daily to acknowledge and aſk the pardon of *their treſpaſſes*, as well as to beg God to give them their daily bread.

Such paſſages as theſe plainly ſhew, that a perfect evenneſs and uniformity of obedience, without any mixture of ſin, is not to be ſuppoſed in any man living. If any are ſo vain as to make the pretence, they have more reaſon to ſay with Job, chap. ix. 20. "If I juſtify myſelf, my own mouth ſhall condemn me; If I ſay I am perfect, it ſhall alſo prove me perverſe:" "My very ſaying ſo, againſt "notorious evidence of fact, will be proof "that either I am a very faulty ſtranger at "home, or a proud and arrogant boaſter." If a man could not be an acceptable Chriſtian without ſuch a perfect uniformity of conduct, there would be no ſuch Chriſtian to be found in our world.

But yet ſuch an evenneſs and conſtancy in our devotedneſs to God and goodneſs is attainable, as in the gracious acceptation of the Goſpel is ſo ſtiled; and is a very different and diſtinguiſhable thing from the character of

of many, who play faſt and looſe with God; from that character, for inſtance, which is given of the Iſraelites in Pſal. lxxviii. 8. as "a generation that ſet not their hearts aright, and whoſe ſpirit was not ſtedfaſt with God;" and in ver. 37, whoſe "heart was not right with him, neither were they ſtedfaſt in his covenant." A right ſpirit is the reverſe of this, ſtedfaſt with God and his covenant. That is,

(1.) Our deſign and purpoſe ſhould be for a conſtant adherence to God and our duty at all times. Thoſe reſolutions for God are inſincere, which are made with a deſigned exception againſt ſome known precepts, or in favour of ſome known ſin: and thoſe are equally inſincere, though they ſhould be ever ſo extenſive as to the branches of duty, which are made only for ſome particular times and ſeaſons, and not for all. As ſuppoſe, I will mind my ſoul and the ſervice of God upon Lord's-days, but I will be my own maſter and at full liberty on other days: or, now in a ſerious hour, when temptation is at a diſtance, I will ſet myſelf to repent of my ſins and to walk ſoftly; but if, when temptation returns, when my companions renew their importunity, I ſhould begin a new ſcore, I hope I ſhall repent again, and God will forgive me. Such purpoſes formed with a view and a ſort of deſign of turning again to folly, are an abomination to God, and ſhew that the firſt ſtep is not taken in real religion. There may be purpoſes of conſtancy, and yet a fatal miſcarriage; but if even theſe be wanting, that man's

religion is vain. He cannot be ſtiled truly upright in the loweſt lenſe, even in intention, who is not come ſo far as to purpoſe not to tranſgreſs; who makes it not his fixed deſign to be faithful to God, and to maintain a good conſcience, at one time as well as at another, for the future as well as at preſent; and eſpecially to be upon his guard in a known hour of temptation and when he may be moſt apprehenſive of danger.

(2.) Religion muſt be actually made our ſtated and ordinary buſineſs, to denominate us with any propriety conſtant in it. We muſt ſet about it as our work and main concern, and not only mind it on the by. This is imported in that expreſſion of the apoſtle, Acts xxiv. 16. "Herein do I exerciſe myſelf, to keep a conſcience void of offence toward God and toward men." "I reckon this "my chief buſineſs, and accordingly make it "my daily care and employment, to endeav- "our to know and do my duty to God and "men. I have no concern upon my hands, "that I eſteem equal to this." Though the thoughts are not employed at all times with equal intenſeneſs and application to the direct conſideration of our duty, as it is impoſſible they ſhould be; yet theſe thoughts are commonly uppermoſt in the mind of a man truly religious, they often recur to it; he minds them, as we ſay, ever and anon: actual attention to his main concern is not long intermitted.

(3.) Deliberate and preſumptuous ſins muſt be carefully avoided; or a breach will be made upon our conſtancy and ſtedfaſtneſs in the

the work of the Lord. In the mild and favourable sense of the Gospel, sins of ignorance and common infirmity break not in upon christian constancy: though they are sins, yet they are not properly breaches of covenant. If we set out in our christian course with a just consideration of the state of human nature, we did not absolutely resolve against these; though we resolved not to countenance them, and to endeavour more and more to outgrow them under divine culture and grace: and as long as we retain that temper with reference to our ordinary infirmities, they should not be thought breaches of covenant. The Psalmist, before his great fall, though he was aware of many imperfections, could say, Psal. xviii. 21, 22. "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me." But known and presumptuous sins are of quite another nature, such as are directly voluntary and chosen, against the dictates of a man's own judgment and conscience: These are direct insults upon God's authority. Every particular act of this kind is contrary to covenant-engagements, and so far a renouncing of God for our Lord and Sovereign. If a good man fall into such offences, it is impossible for him to be assured that he is born of God, as long as he continues under the power of them. And in the number of such presumptuous sins we must reckon—

All great and notorious sins in their nature such as either any man may discern to be amiss by

by the light of nature, or that a man competently acquainted with the holy Scriptures may plainly perceive to be forbidden there. If a man fall into any of these crimes, though upon a sudden temptation, and without discernable thought and reflection; yet they cannot be called sins of mere surprize and infirmity, because they are so contrary to the light and habitual frame of a good man, that they could not be done without some reluctancy.

And any sin, though of the least kind, when it is committed upon actual deliberation, and against the actual judgment of the mind, is a wilful sin, which breaks in upon evangelical stedfastness. If there be time and space between the temptation and the ill action, to consider the evil nature of it; if our heart rebukes us at the time, admonishing us that God forbids what we are about to do, and yet we presume to do it; if there be debate and arguing, and yet temptation carries the day; this is a breach of the covenant, though in ever so minute an instance. It makes us "the servants of sin;" for "to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, his servants we are to whom we so obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness," Rom. vi. 16. And if a servant of God so yields himself to any wilful sin, it would be a sin unto death, if he was not renewed again to repentance.

And much more heinous still will it be, if the instance of offence into which a man falls, be at once greatly criminal in itself, and such as

as conscience is habitually furnished against, and also which is actually remonstrated against at the time. This is a prodigious breach upon the temper and character of a saint. As in the case of David's dreadful fall into the complicated sins of adultery and murder; or that of Peter, when he denied his Master thrice with oaths and curses, and that after a solemn warning which he had received but a few hours before of his danger. Such sins make a dreadful waste upon conscience, and such an interruption in a holy course, as would be ruinous without particular repentance, and really makes their recovery difficult. Hence David found occasion to pray for God's creating power to purify and renew him, as if he was to begin the divine life anew, Psal. li. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." And Peter's recovery is described as another conversion, Luke xxii. 32. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Though such instances of recovery may prevent utter despair in others upon their falls; yet the falls themselves are so marked in Scripture, as much more strongly to admonish us against the like.

(4.) Upon any known falls, there should be a speedy and proportionable repentance. Next to a constant evenness in our walk without turning again presumptuously to folly, a quick return to God and to ourselves by unfeigned and answerable repentance, is the best that can be done; that the interruption may be as small as possible. Indeed David's case is a

ſad inſtance of the hardening quality of ſuch offences even in good men, that he ſeems to have continued many months under the power of his ſin: It is a mighty inſtance of grace, that he was recovered after all. But certainly where there is a latent principle of goodneſs under ſuch ſins, it is not uſual to ſuffer them to lie long upon them. Upon the return of ſuch exerciſes, as a pious man has accuſtomed himſelf to, ſelf examination and prayer, hearing or reading the word of God, ſurely he will bethink himſelf, and then not be eaſy till he break off his ſin by repentance, and come to himſelf. His return will be with eminent bitterneſs and deep ſorrow; he will not be for covering or extenuating his ſin with excuſes, or for avoiding juſt ſhame for it; but will condemn himſelf more ſeverely than others can do, and give glory to God by confeſſion and reparation to his power, as public as his offence was. Like Peter, when rouſed out of his lethargy, "he went out and wept bitterly." He will do all that lies in him, to repair the diſhonour done to God, or the damage to his neighbour; will walk ſoftly and humbly all his days; lie as a deep penitent at the foot of divine mercy; endeavour to regain the ground he has loſt, and to repair the breaches made in the healthful ſtate of his ſoul; and double his guard and care for time to come.

The iſſue of a fall with a good man, ſhould be like that deſcribed by the apoſtle in the caſe of the Corinthians, 2 Cor. vii. 11. "This ſelf-ſame thing, that ye ſorrowed after a godly ſort, what carefulneſs it wrought in you," that you

you might not offend again? "Yea, what clearing of yourſelves?" Not by ſelf-juſtification or excuſes; but by endeavours to clear yourſelves from guilt, by application to God for his pardoning mercy; and from the ſin itſelf, by putting evil far away. "Yea, what indignation" at the ſin, and at yourſelves for having been guilty of it? "Yea, what vehement deſire," that you might by no means fail of pardon and purification? "Yea, what zeal" for the honour of God in time to come, out of a ſenſe of the diſhonour which you had caſt on him and his ways? "Yea, what revenge" upon your ſins, by careful endeavours to mortify the deeds of the body? Thoſe, who after eminent falls have nothing of this temper, will have juſt ground to fear the inſincerity of all their former pretenſions.

2. The chriſtian temper and courſe muſt be perſiſted in to the end of life. This is to be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable in it. It is not enough, that there hath appeared ſome evenneſs and conſtancy hitherto; but we muſt be careful that we hold out to the end. Many have begun and continued for a while to behave in a very promiſing manner, but "their latter end has been worſe than their beginning," and they have proved apoſtates after all. But we are concerned, as it is ſaid *the righteous ſhall do*, to *hold on our way*, Job xvii. 9. and *having begun to build*, that we may be *able to finiſh*.

That we be not wearied out by the length of our way. We are to lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees," Heb. xii. 12.

12. Not allowing ourſelves to be "weary of well-doing"; either by reaſon of the frequent repetition of ſelf-denying duties; or through the decays of age and ſtrength, and the increaſe of bodily infirmities, which are apt to make the exerciſes of religion tireſome. We ſhould be careful to maintain a *willing ſpirit*, even when the *fleſh is weak*. Thus it is promiſed, Iſa. xl. 31. That "they that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength, they ſhall mount up with wings as eagles, they ſhall run and not be weary, and they ſhall walk and not faint."

That we ſuffer not ourſelves to give over our work in deſpondency, becauſe of the ſlow progreſs and ſmall ſucceſs we diſcern: As if it was an impracticable thing to arrive at the perfection we hope for, becauſe we ſtill find oppoſition from depraved appetites, and affections and paſſions. We ſhould go on notwithſtanding in our conflict, as aſſured of victory if we faint not.

That we are not affrighted from our ſtedfaſtneſs by the approach of ſufferings; but reſolutely adhere to God and a good conſcience, *withſtanding in an evil day*, that *having done all we* may *ſtand*: Remembering the terms on which Chriſt invited us to become his diſciples, that we muſt be content to *deny ourſelves*, to *take up our croſs*, any croſs which he lays in our way, and to *follow him*, whitherſoever he leads us; and that *whoſoever will ſave his life* by turning his back on Chriſt, *ſhall looſe it; and whoſoever will looſe his life for his ſake, ſhall find it*, Mat. xvi. 24, 25.

That

That we ſuffer not ourſelves to be drawn aſide from the faith or practice of the goſpel, by giving heed to them that lie in wait to deceive; but "beware, leſt being led away by the error of the wicked, we fall from our own ſtedfaſtneſs," 2. Pet. iii. 17. To this purpoſe it concerns us to ſee, that our perſuaſions are well-grounded in the word of God, and not taken up upon truſt; and then that no other conſideration, beſide evidence of a miſtake, draw us off from that which we apprehend to be the truth as it is in Jeſus, or from the practice of any known duty.

And finally, that we be not inſenſibly drawn on to apoſtacy, by the importunate allurements of preſent temptations. Many who behaved well for a time, and ſome that have acquitted themſelves with bravery in a time of perſecution; yet by remitting their care and watchfulneſs, have had the edge of holy affections and reſolutions ſo worn off by degrees, through the deceitfulneſs of riches, the cares of life, and the cuſtomary ſociety of irreligious men, that they have "left their firſt love; the things that remain are ready to die," if they prove not abſolute apoſtates. It claims the lively and daily concern of all who would finiſh well, to guard againſt this danger.

II. I am to ſhew the neceſſity of this qualification of ſtedfaſtneſs, in the whole chriſtian temper and work.

1. It is neceſſary to our acceptance with God, and our final happineſs by divine conſtitution.

Conſtancy and evenneſs in our courſe of obedience,

obedience, so as not to turn aside knowingly to crooked paths, is many ways signified to be a necessary term of our acceptance. It is a natural fruit of sincerity or uprightness; and therefore as that is insisted upon, so must this fruit of it be. The Psalmist desires to be *kept* free *from presumptuous sins*; because *then*, says he, *shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression*, Psal. xix. 13. Customary sinning is often declared to be inconsistent with a new nature, or being born of God. So the apostle John, 1 John iii. 6. "Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not," as a matter of allowed and ordinary practice; "whosoever sinneth" in such a manner, "hath not seen him, neither known him." No, he belongs to another master and father; for, ver. 8. "He that committeth sin, is of the devil." Ver. 6. "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." And so our blessed Lord himself, John viii. 34. "Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin." The meaning of these passages can be no less than this; that a truly good man cannot allow himself ordinarily to commit a known sin, and least of all to continue "wallowing in the mire," if he should fall into it. Without an habitual abstinence from known sins, we can have no title to the benefit of Christ's sacrifice. Under the law no sacrifice was allowed for presumptuous offences; but "he who did aught presumptuously," was understood to "reproach the Lord, and was to be cut off from among his people," Numb. xv. 30.

xv. 30. The reason is given, ver. 31. "Because he had despised the word of the Lord, and had broken his commandments." Under the Gospel indeed the virtue of Christ's sacrifice reaches to presumptuous sins, as well as others: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," 1 John i. 7. But from none without repentance, or till men come to *walk in the light*, and *not in darkness*, ver. 6.

Perseverance is equally necessary to our final reward. So the promises run. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved," Mat. x. 22. "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour, and immortality, eternal life," Rom. ii. 7. "Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find so doing," Luke xii 43 On the other hand, apostacy is declared to cut off all just hope, and to fix men under the most dreadful doom, Ezek. xviii. 24. "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations which the wicked man doth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." Heb. x. 26, 27. "If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth," that is by apostacy, and without repentance, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins: But a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall

shall devour the adversaries." If we *draw back*, it is *unto perdition*, ver. 39. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. "If after men have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Awful warnings! which should ever keep up a wakeful care to finish our course with joy.

2. Stedfastness is necessary to the credit of our holy profession. Nothing is so great a disparagement to religion, and so freely opens the mouths of its enemies, as any scandalous falls, or especially the open apostacy of those who have made a distinguishing pretence to it. The body of mankind, how injuriously soever, will interpret that to be a defect in religion itself, which is really nothing else but the great imperfection or insincerity of those who have pretended to it: And therefore every good man should be solicitous, that "his good may not be evil spoken of" through his default, Rom. xiv. 16. "Wo to the world because of offences.———But wo to that man by whom the offence cometh," Matth. xviii. 7.

3. It is necessary in conformity to our Lord Jesus Christ: That we may prevailingly bear his resemblance, though we cannot in this world do it perfectly. The apostle

John

John argues from God's perfect and absolute purity and holiness, that prevailing purity is necessary in all that share in his friendship; that "if we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth," 1 John i. 5, 6. So all that the holy Jesus will own for his, must be really conformed to him, in the stedfastness of obedience which he performed in our nature, though they cannot come up to his perfect and absolute measure. His course of obedience was exactly uniform, regular, and even without any variation; he always actually exercised a devotedness to God. The same temper must be habitual in us, or there will be no similitude of character. And as he was *obedient unto death*, Phil. ii. 8. and *finished*, as well as began, *the work which God gave him to do*, John xvii. 4. so we must in our measure follow him to the end of our course below, being *faithful unto death*.

By way of reflection,

1. We have here a rule for trying the goodness of our state, as far as we are advanced in life, by enquiring into the evangelical constancy of the christian temper and course, since we have given up our names to be the Lord's: Whether it hath been the daily settled bent of our souls to please God, and avoid every known sin. Too many seem allowedly to divide their time between God and sin: From transgressing they fly to repentance; and then, as if past accounts were cancelled by that means, they return again with ease from repenting to known transgressions:

Thus they do in a circle, and think they have done enough. They are always overcome, when a ſuitable temptation offers, and always ſorry when it is over, but as ready as ever to relapſe when a new temptation comes. Their "goodneſs is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it paſſes away." This is not vital religion, nor theſe "the ſpots of God's children." Their purpoſe is never allowedly to offend, their ordinary courſe is an even walk with God; they rarely fall foully and preſumptuouſly; but if they do, they repent in earneſt, and very ſeldom relapſe. Yet,

2. The beſt have room to cenſure themſelves for the leſſer unevenneſſes of their frames and courſe. Though they ſhould not be ſuch as are direct breaches of covenant, yet they are ſinful and evil; and the Goſpel-way to prevent theſe from making an inroad upon the habitual ſtate of our ſouls and our peace with God, is by diſallowing them, exerciſing a general repentance for them, endeavouring to gain ground of them, and ſoliciting for the daily pardon of them through the blood and interceſſion of Chriſt.

3. We have all reaſon to be excited to the greateſt concern and care, that we may always be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable in the work of the Lord.

We have many warnings of our danger, by Scripture and experience, both of intermiſſions to which we are ſubject, and of greater falls, and even of apoſtacy itſelf: Enough to awaken our conſtant fear and care.

Every breach made in our Chriſtian courſe,

leſſens

leſſens the pleaſure of it, unavoidably increaſes our difficulties, and is in itſelf a tendency to apoſtacy. Which ſhould therefore ſet us on our guard againſt the leaſt defection from God.

The ſtedfaſtneſs of God to his covenant with us, and the uniform courſe of his paſt goodneſs to us, are arguments to our gratitude not to be unſtedfaſt with him: "He is with us while we are with him;" his covenant is "ordered in all things and ſure, and his promiſes yea and amen;" he never breaks with us, till we are groſsly perfidious. And we have found him hitherto nigh at hand to us, in all that we have called upon him for. Upon any revolt therefore he may juſtly expoſtulate with us, "What iniquity have ye found in me, that ye are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity?" Jer. ii. 5.

The beſt we have to expect, if we turn aſide to folly, is, his fatherly corrections. There is not a kinder declaration in the book of God, than that in Pſal. lxxxix. 30——33. "If his children forſake my law, and walk not in my judgments;—Then will I viſit their tranſgreſſion with a rod, and their iniquity with ſtripes. Nevertheleſs my loving-kindneſs will I not utterly take from him, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to fail." The deſign of ſuch corrections is graciouſly to reclaim them; but why ſhould we make our father's rod neceſſary?

That we may therefore be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, I would offer the following directions for a cloſe.

See

See that you begin well upon the foundation of a ſincere and unreſerved devotedneſs to God; that you have the power, as well as the form of Godlineſs. A flaw in the foundation will make the building totter; and unleſs it be rectified may occaſion our periſhing under the ruins of it; like the houſe, which our Saviour ſpeaks of, that was built upon the ſand.

Often review the ſtate of your ſouls; let not long accounts remain without inſpection: But often examine what ground you have gained or loſt, that diſorders may be ſoon rectified, before they have proceeded far, or before your hearts are "hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin."

Improve every melancholy inſtance of the falls of others, to awaken your own caution. When you ſee other peoples miſcarriages, the beſt improvement you can make of them is that to which the apoſtle directs upon ſuch an occaſion; "Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall," 1 Cor. x. 12.

Be ſtedfaſt in the faith, as ever you would be ſteady in your obedience. That is the principle which feeds and animates chriſtian obedience. Every doctrine of divine truth has a practical influence; and its influence will be proportionable to the ſtrength of our perſuaſion about it. If your faith be ſhaken, that which depends upon it, and would not be a reaſonable ſervice without it, will be ſhaken too.

Aim at advances, if you would not decline. If once you think you are come to your full pitch,

pitch, it will ſoon make you remiſs, and lay you open to the ſnares of life. Therefore St. Peter unites the exhortations; "Beware, leſt you fall from your ſtedfaſtneſs: But grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt," 1 Pet. iii. 17, 18.

Eye the moſt excellent examples to excite your emulation. Make thoſe your choſen patterns, who walk moſt cloſely with God; and even them no farther than they do ſo.

Truſt not your own hearts, but "in him who is able to keep you from falling," And therefore often and earneſtly pray to him to "keep you back from preſumptuous ſins," Pſal xix. 13. to "make you perfect, ſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, ſettle you," 1 Pet. v. 10. "to keep you by his mighty power, through faith unto ſalvation," ch. i. 5.

And often think of the promiſed reward as ſure, and great, and near. "Knowing the time," Chriſtians, reckon it "high time to awake out of ſleep; for now is your ſalvation nearer than when ye believed."

SERMON XVII.

A tender Spirit.

2 CHRON. xxxiv. 27. the former part.

Becauſe thine heart was tender.—

THIS is God's own commendation of king Joſiah. He entered upon his reign very young, at eight years old; and though he was the ſon of an exceeding wicked father, yet was a prince of eminent religion through the ſeveral periods of his government. Perſonal religion appeared in him betimes. "In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young," or when he was but ſixteen years old, "he began to ſeek after the God of David his father;" that is, he publicly avowed the worſhip of the true God, which had been notoriouſly caſt off in the days of his own father Amon, ver. 3. "And in the twelfth year" of his reign, the twentieth of his age, "he began to purge Judah and Jeruſalem from the high places, and the groves," &c. He began a public reformation of the worſhip of God, from the abuſes which had been countenanced in the days of his predeceſſor; ſeveral of which the ſacred hiſtorian goes on to enumerate. "And in the eighteenth year of his reign," when he was twenty-ſix years old, he proceeded to repair the houſe of God,

ver.

ver. 8, 9, &c. In the courſe of the repairs, "Hilkiah the prieſt found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moſes," ver. 14.

Whether this was that original book of the law which Moſes laid up by the ark, or ſome antient authentic copy of it, is not ſo certain. Probably this had been concealed in ſome ſecret place of the temple, to ſecure it from the impious fury of ſome of the idolatrous kings of Judah; and now happily came to light, when people were ſet to work to repair it. It is plain by what follows, that both king and people were in a great meaſure ſtrangers to the contents of it till this diſcovery. Probably the reading of the law had been neglected both publicly and privately in the reigns of ſeveral wicked kings who had gone before Joſiah; it may be moſt of the copies had been wilfully deſtroyed, or, by the general neglect of tranſcribing more, were grown very rare and ſcarce. Without doubt the king had not written a copy of the law with his own hand, according to the command in Deut. xvii. 18. which ſurely he would have done before this time, in obedience to the law, if he had been particularly acquainted with it; ſince he is declared to have "done that which was right in the ſight of the Lord" from his early days, ver. 2. i. e. according to ſuch degrees of ligh about the mind of God as he had, before the law was found; either by hints received from ſome good people about him; or by means of ſome imperfect abſtracts of the law, which might go about, while intire copies were wanting.

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The law being found, it was carried to the king; who, like a man earneſtly deſirous to know the way of God more perfectly, ordered it to be read to him; and like a man of a tender conſcience, "when he heard the words of the law, rent his clothes," ver. 18, 19. fell under it, ſtruck with the dreadful threatenings contained in it againſt tranſgreſſors; and apprehending from them, that *great wrath from the Lord* was like to be *poured out upon them*, ſends a deputation of ſome of his principal miniſters to *inquire of God* in the caſe by Huldah *the propheteſs*, ver. 20, 21. to enquire whether there were any hopes that God's anger might be appeaſed, and what was neceſſary to this end. Huldah by direction from God lets him know, that God was peremptorily reſolved to execute his vegneance upon the Jews for their great and long revolts from him: but for the king himſelf, he ſhould have the favour to "be gathered to his grave in peace, that his eyes might not ſee all the evil that was coming upon them." The reaſon of this mark of diſtinction in Joſiah's caſe is given in the text: "Becauſe thine heart was tender, and thou haſt humbled thyſelf before God, when thou heardeſt the words againſt this place, &c. I have even heard thee alſo, ſaith the Lord."

I have choſen this divine encomium upon an Old Teſtament ſaint, to repreſent to you one eminent ingredient or qualification of the chriſtian temper, which ſhould attend us with reference to every part and branch of it; *a tender heart*.

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The ſame thing is expreſſed by *an heart of fleſh* in oppoſition to *a ſtony heart*, in ſome promiſes of the Old Teſtament, which were to receive their principal accompliſhment in evangelical times in the ſpiritual ſeed of Abraham, in Ezek. xi. 19. and chap, xxxvi. 26. "I will take away the ſtony heart out of your fleſh, and I will give you an heart of fleſh." I apprehend St. Paul had thoſe promiſes in his eye, when he ſays to the Corinthian converts, 2 Cor. iii. 3. "Ye are manifeſtly declared to be the epiſtle of Chriſt, miniſtred by us, written, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of ſtone, but in fleſhly tables of the heart." Theſe converts were a ſort of epiſtle from Chriſt, in commendation of the ſincerity and efficacy of the apoſtle's miniſtry among them: this commendatory epiſtle of Chriſt was written in the "fleſhly tables of their heart;" that is, in their hearts made ſoft, and ready to attend to and obey the Goſpel by the operation of the Holy Spirit, agreeable to the antient promiſe, that he would "give an heart of fleſh."

To this ſtands oppoſed what we ſo often read of, "hardneſs of heart," an "heart of ſtone." We read of ſome, who "made their hearts as an adamant ſtone," Zech. vii. 12. the extraordinary hardneſs of which makes it exceeding difficult to carve or faſhion it by art into a regular figure. Others are ſaid to "make their faces harder than a rock," Jer. v. 5. which you cannot eaſily move or penetrate. The ſame bad diſpoſition is elſewhere

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ſet out by a metaphor taken from a part of fleſh as has contracted a brawny ſtiffneſs and hardneſs, by much exerciſe and hard labour. Under ſuch an alluſion the Gentile world is deſcribed as "paſt feeling," Eph. iv. 19. And others as "having their conſciences ſeared with an hot iron." The tender heart in the text ſtands oppoſed to all this.

My buſineſs upon this head ſhall be, I. To give a general account of the import of a *tender heart.* II. To deſcribe more particularly the ways wherein ſuch a temper ſhould expreſs itſelf. And, III. To ſhew what foundation is laid for it by chriſtianity.

I. It may be proper to give a general account of the import of a *tender heart.* Two things ſeem to be pointed at by it.

1. A quick and ready ſenſe and feeling in ſpiritual things. A tender heart is one that hath ſenſes exerciſed and prompt to diſcern both good and evil, Heb. v. 12. Spiritual things are apt to make a deep impreſſion, or ſpiritual pains and pleaſures are eaſily felt, where this is a man's character.

Quickneſs of apprehenſion in matters of a religious nature is one inſtance. Light in the mind is neceſſary to guide all our powers and actions. "If our eye be evil, the whole body muſt be full of darkneſs; if therefore the light that is in thee," in the underſtanding, which is the eye of the mind, "be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs?" Matth. vi. 23. If our minds are blind to the true light, or under the influence of a falſe light, this muſt be followed with diſorder in all our actions.

tions. But how many are insensible of the light which shines around them, and of those things, of which one would think they might have the fullest conviction. Their understandings are darkened, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness or hardness of their hearts," Eph. iv. 18. "God speaketh to them once, yea twice; but they perceive it not," Job xxxiii. 14. They discern not plain duty, though it glares in their eye with full evidence. They know not the plague of their own heart, though it is so obvious to reflection. How happy is it on the other hand, to be ready to take in the light which is offered? to be quick at discovering our duty and danger, and wants and distempers, our best friends and our worst enemies, the way in which we ought to go, and the temptations in our way? Things of such importance to our spiritual and eternal welfare?

Ready reflections of conscience are also included. When conscience is silent, so as not to animadvert upon sin, and check men for it, or not to set their duty in view, and excite them to it, or when it favours some known sin, or connives at the omission of some plain duty: when this power of the soul is not in a disposition to act, or not to act impartially; it bespeaks a hard and insensible mind. Either the "mind and conscience is defiled," Tit. i. 15. that is, the practical judgment is vitiated, so as to call evil good, and good evil: or else it is *seared* as *with a hot iron*," 1 Tim. iv. 2. so as to be altogether unapt for sensation. But a tender heart imports, that conscience is quick

quick and active, ready to answer its character of being *the candle of the Lord within us* to *search* us out, and to be a faithful monitor, *accusing* or *excusing* as there is reason given for either.

A disposition to be easily and suitably affected with our own spiritual concerns, enters into the notion of a tender heart. A hard heart is unmoved by such things as are fittest to impress it. Of how many is it the character, that the knowledge they have dies as they receive it, and kindles no answerable affections? "Seeing many things, they observe them not; opening the ears, yet they hear not," Isa. xlii. 20. The meaning of the prophet is, those people were as little affected with the works or word of God, as if they had not seen or heard of them. Or if affections are moved for a time, they are but transient, they presently wear off: this is the description of the stony ground, Mat. xiii. 20. 21. So many deal with their conviction, like the man described by St. James, chap. i. 24. "He beholdeth himself, as in a glass, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." Such is the remorse of many sinners under divine punishments, like the people of Israel in Psal. lxxvii. 34—37. "When God slew them, then they sought him; and they returned, and enquired early after God. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues: For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." A tender heart, on the contrary, is readily affected according

according to the nature and importance of things repreſented to it: and theſe affections produce laſting fruit. The impreſſions are ſtrong, and the influence is lively.

2. A pliable diſpoſition to yield to divine influences, and engage in the practice of our duty, is the other branch of a tender heart. Though we ſhould have ever ſo great a ſenſe of ſin and duty; yet if our hearts are unyielding, and will not return unto the Lord, this is hardneſs of heart in the ſenſe of Scripture. However we may have been awakened by God's Spirit ſtriving with us, by the reflections of conſcience, by ordinances or providences; yet if all this leaves us as it found us, if we forſake not the ſins of which we are admoniſhed, nor engage in the duties of which we are convinced, our hearts are ſtill in God's account as the adamant. Indeed the greater our light is, if we hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs, our obſtinacy is the more aggravated: as Stephen charges the Jews, Acts vii. 21. "Ye ſtiff-necked and uncircumciſed in heart and ears, ye do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt;" counteract his deſigu and motions. "Hardneſs and an impenitent heart are much the ſame thing, Rom. ii. 5. But a tender heart chearfully complies with the will of God: It cannot be deſcribed more fully in a few words than in theſe, that it is "willing and obedient," Iſa. i. 19.

II. I proceed to give a more particular deſcription of the principal ways wherein this holy tenderneſs of ſpirit ſhould expreſs itſelf in our courſe. And a repreſentation of this

may be given in reference to several points.

1. In relation to the word of God, or the discoveries he has made of his mind. I begin with this, as it was the particular instance referred to in the case of Josiah.

A man of a religious tenderness of spirit will make it his business to acquaint himself with the mind of God. Others may be content to act blindfold, or to take their religion upon trust, to "receive for doctrines the commandments of men:" because they chiefly consult their own ease, or that which may be acceptable to other people. But a good man has in the first place determined to "shew himself approved to God," and therefore is concerned to be well assured of his mind. He may not be so soft and pliable as others, to the dictates and determinations of men; for their mind is not the thing he is inquiring after; but what his Lord and Master reveals for truth, or prescribes as duty. This he is earnestly solicitous to know, and therefore diligently studies his Bible, as the notification which God hath given of his mind. "I meditate in thy precepts," says David, "and have respect unto thy ways," Psal cxix. 15. He endeavours to make the best use of the assistances within his reach, which may any way help him to understand the Scriptures; especially of the ministry of the Gospel: but then he does not believe the sense of Scripture, given by a minister, or by any number of ministers, to be the sense of Christ, merely because they say it is; but, like the noble Bereans, he "searches the Scriptures diligently,"

to

to discover whether their sense agree with this rule, Acts xvii. 11. and readily receives what he finds to have a foundation there, but no more. It is a noble obstinacy to men's authority, and at the same time bespeaks the greatest obsequiousness to Christ, to admit no more for his mind, upon the dictates of men, than we can ourselves discern to be so, upon an impartial comparison of what they say with that in his word upon which they found it. But on the other hand, a tender spirit is willing to learn from any man, and will be thankful for any assistance to discover the meaning of the Scripture in any particular of truth and duty.

Such a man pays a ready and reverential subjection to the authority of God in his word, as far as he understands it: whether it be in less or greater concerns, in matters of belief or of practice. "My heart," says David, "stands in awe of thy word," Psal. cxix. 161. Such a man chearfully sacrifices any favourite opinion or inclination, as soon as he apprehends that the word of God declares against it. It is included in a man's becoming a Christian, that he makes this determination in the general, that *every thought* shall *be captivated to the obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. x. 5. Not that he hath no thoughts, no sentiments, no inclinations which are different from the mind of Christ: every mistake in judgment, every irregular desire certainly is so. But as he comes gradually to discern the inconsistency between the mind of Christ and any sentiment or practice of his own, he puts his

his general determination in practice in that particular case: that wrong thought is captivated to the obedience of Christ. The language of his heart concerning the whole law of God, is the same with the language of Israel upon the delivery of the Mosaical law, Exod. xxiv. 7. "Moses took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: And they said, All that the Lord hath said, will we do, and be obedient." And as particulars come to his notice, he lends an obedient ear to them.

He is afraid to do any thing which he doubts to be disagreeable to the word of God. There is indeed a conscience unduly scrupulous, which is a great obstruction to the usefulness and comfort of some infirm Christians: And it is the duty and interest of all to come, as far as may be, to a clear and determinate judgment about the particulars of their conduct; by considering, as any doubt occurs, what foundation there is for it in the word of God; and by consulting the wise and judicious upon the case: for it is past doubt, that we should not make more sins and duties to ourselves than God hath made so. But some, by the weakness of their judgment, or the power of melancholy, cannot get clear of their doubts, as to some things, which others esteem lawful: and in some parts of conduct in lesser matters, possibly the most judicious can discern no more than probability concerning the mind of God on either side. Now while a scruple remains, though it should in itself be ill-grounded, it is a just discovery of a tender

tender ſpirit to forbear an action which appears doubtful. The apoſtle clearly decides this caſe, in the affair of meats forbidden by the law of Moſes. The Jewiſh converts by means of the remaining prejudices of their education, thought it unlawful to eat theſe; the Gentile converts were perſuaded of their chriſtian liberty, and they were on the right ſide of the queſtion: But while this miſtaken apprehenſion remained in the Jewiſh converts, it would have been ſinful in them to do as the Gentiles did, Rom. xiv. 23. *He that doubteth is damned*, ſelf-condemned, *if he eat, becauſe he eateth not of faith.* Where ſin is ſuſpected on one hand, and there is no room for a ſuſpicion on the other, a tender ſpirit will avoid the doubtful part.

He is readily impreſſed, ſuitable to the ſeveral parts of truth propoſed to him out of the word of God. Our affections under the proper direction and conduct of light, are of the greateſt ſervice to facilitate holy obedience. And it is a good indication of a tender ſpirit, to have ſuitable affections readily excited, according to the particular branches of truth and duty ſet before us. It is the general character of a man ſincerely good, that he "trembles at God's word," Iſa. lxvi. 2. 5. He receives it with reverential awe, and becoming affection. Thus Noah, *being warned of God* of the approaching deluge, was *moved with fear*, Heb. xi. 7. This was the expreſſion of Joſiah's tender heart in this chapter, ver. 19. "When he heard the words of the law, he rent his clothes." So when the riches of grace

are set before us, to have love and gratitude, and trust in God, excited thereby to a proper exercise, is highly becoming a soul softened and ingenuously melted by the comfortable discoveries of the Gospel.

And such a man frequently compares his heart and life with God's word: as one suspicious that he may have offended, and yet truly desirous not to offend, or to make his peace and to come back to God and himself, as soon as may be, if he hath offended. "I communed," says the Psalmist, "with my own heart, and made diligent search," Psalm lxxvii. 6. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies," Psal. cxix. 59.

2. In relation to sin, a tender spirit eminently appears.

Conviction is more easily admitted, where this is the frame of the heart. Solomon tells us, Prov. vii. 10. "that a reproof enters more into a wise man, than a hundred stripes into a fool." When conscience is awake, it is ready to give attention to a hint, and to make personal application. In two sad instances, which we have upon record, how far even good men may be "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;" that is, Peter's denial of his Master, and David's scandalous fall and continuance in it for so long a time: yet we have in both an instance also of the easy admission of conviction by a man habitually good. A look from the Lord Jesus darted the most pungent conviction into the mind of Peter, so that "he went out and wept bitterly," Luke xxii. 61, 62.

62. And a word from the prophet Nathan bowed David's heart, and brought him to confess his sin, 2 Sam. xii. 13. And in another case, the numbering of the people, "his heart smote him" without a monitor, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. A tender heart is jealous of more sin in himself than he particularly knows; therefore the language of his heart is often the same with David's, Psalm xix. 12. "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults." It would therefore be strange, if he should be unready to fall under conviction, when his sin is set in order before him; if then he should endeavour to cover and excuse it.

Upon conviction, shame and sorrow readily flow in a tender mind. The hardened sinner "is not ashamed, when he committeth abominations," Jer. vi. 15. possibly he may "glory in his shame," Phil. iii. 19. But softening grace strikes a man with deep remorse upon the remembrance of his offences, it produces "a broken and contrite heart," Psal. li. 17. He "is ashamed and blushes to lift up his face to God because of his iniquities," Ezr. ix. 6. Like *the publican* who *stood afar off*, and could hardly presume to *lift up so much as his eyes to heaven; he smites upon his breast*, full of contrition and godly sorrow, Luke xviii. 13. His soul is filled with pungent concern, and overspread with a holy confusion; he is more free to condemn himself than others can be: and that not merely because he may be liable to human punishment or censure, but much more for his offence

fence againſt God; and even in caſes where men might rather commend than condemn him. The great impreſſion made on his mind, falls in with the confeſſion of the prodigal: "Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon." His ſorrow is more animated by ingenuity, than by fear. Sin is ſo odious and burdenſome to him, that he mourns even for the offences of others; and much more for his own.

He is affected with known ſin of every kind; the omiſſions of duty, as well as direct commiſſions of ſin. The very remains of ſin dwelling in him, though he has hopes that no ſin has the dominion, are no ſmall uneaſineſs to him; which often occaſion ſuch a complaint as that, "O wretched man that I am! who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?"

He is very ſolicitous to be delivered from the guilt and the ſtain of the ſins of which he is convinced. A ſoft heart cannot be eaſy under the ſenſe of ſin, till he can have hope of a pardon; till his feet are waſhed when they have contracted new defilement. David, come to himſelf, expreſſes the greateſt importunity: "Waſh me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanſe me from my ſin: For I acknowledge my tranſgreſſion, and my ſin is ever before me." Pſal. li. 2, 3. A true penitent, upon conviction in any inſtance of tranſgreſſion, will ſue for mercy, plead the atonement, and earneſtly pray for the ſanctifying Spirit. *Create in me a clean heart, O God,* after-

ter my new impurities; *and renew a right ſpirit within me*, ver. 10. Even ſuſpicion of guilt will carry him to the mercy-ſeat, to ſupplicate mercy.

And the matter will not reſt in relentings, but iſſue in the moſt eſſential part of repentance; ceaſing to do evil, and learning to do well. "Godly ſorrow worketh repentance to ſalvation never to be repented of," 2 Cor. vii. 10.

And as a tender ſpirit will naturally diſcover itſelf in the proper exerciſes of genuine repentance for ſin admitted; ſo it will produce a cautious and habitual fear of ſin through a man's courſe. He dares not indulge himſelf in a thing which he apprehends diſpleaſing to God, though it ſhould be ever ſo common, or paſs among men for a trifle. "He abſtains from the very appearance of evil," 1 Theſſ. v. 22. as afraid to tread upon doubtful ground. "He watches and prays that he may not enter upon temptation;" is afraid of inſnaring company, and of ſuch actions as he finds to be generally dangerous to himſelf though they may be lawful and ſafe to others. He is careful, that he "make no proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof, and keeps his heart with all diligence."

Theſe are the proper expreſſions of a tender ſpirit with reference to ſin.

3. In relation to the events of providence, and the circumſtances of his own lot and condition. And in this matter,

When he is under the moſt favourable providences, he is afraid of abuſing divine mercies;

mercies; leſt "his table ſhould become a ſnare," or he ſhould "be full and deny God:" Leſt he ſhould grow ſecure and forgetful of his dependance on God; or his ſpirit become vain and worldly; or he ſhould "put the evil day far from him," or give into any criminal indulgence of his appetites, or be lifted up with pride.

He entertains an awful fear at the apprehenſion of God's judgments. That was David's frame, Pſ. cxix. 120. *My fleſh trembleth for fear of God, and I am afraid of his judgments.* Noah was *moved with fear* of them, when they were at a diſtance: And much more will a man of a tender mind be ſo when *God's hand* is viſibly *ſtretched out*, or when there are many moral prognoſtics that God is *making a way to his anger.* The leaſt tokens of God's diſpleaſure affect him, ſuch as others hardly obſerve; and while hardened ſinners are unmoved under the greateſt. Jer. v. 3. "Thou haſt ſtricken them, but they have not grieved; thou haſt conſumed them, but they have refuſed to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refuſed to return."

He is deſirous to underſtand the voice of God in his providences; that God would "ſhew him wherefore he contendeth with him," Job x. 2. And he endeavours, that his own temper and behaviour may comport with the providences he is under; whether they are proſperous or afflictive. He would "both know how to be abaſed, and how to abound," Phil. iv. 12. The particular proſpect of calamities

lamities approaching excites him to "prepare ſuitably to meet his God," Am. iv. 12. And his chief attention from time to time is to the duty of his preſent condition.

4. This temper, where it is genuine, will expreſs itſelf illuſtriouſly in relation to the honour of God.

Such a man will do what he can himſelf to promote it. It is the general ſcope of his actions, to do "all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. All that he has and is, is ſincerely conſecrated to this aim. And according to his ſtation he will be active and zealous in any deſigns that are on foot in his day, conducing to the glory of God and the ſervice of religion. He guards againſt every thing in his own conduct, which may occaſion the name of God to be blaſphemed. He is willing to hazard his own honour or intereſt, or life itſelf, if God may but be glorified; and can be content to have his own reputation laid in the duſt, if his Maſter may be magnified by it. As John the Baptiſt "rejoiced greatly becauſe of the bridegoom's voice;" though he foreſaw that Chriſt's entrance upon his miniſtry would eclipſe the honour of his own. "He muſt increaſe, but I muſt decreaſe," John iii. 29, 30.

In any ſin he commits, while inſenſible ſinners are chiefly concerned for the diſhonour done to themſelves, when their ſin is found out, a man of a tender conſcience chiefly laments the diſhonour done to God by it. God by Nathan ſet David's ſin before him in this view, 2 Sam. xii. 14. "By this deed thou haſt given great occaſion to the enemies of the Lord

to

to blaſpheme. And when David comes to make his acknowledgment, he principally reflects on the ſame thing, Pſal. li. 4. "Againſt thee, thee only, have I ſinned, and done this evil in thy ſight: that thou mighteſt be juſtified when thou ſpeakeſt, and be clear when thou judgeſt."

He greatly rejoices in any thing that tends to the honour of God. If he hears of the advancement of his intereſt, where he hath no immediate concern in the matter; if good be done any where, though he has no hand in it: And in any ſervice done by others, though he may ſeem to be leſſened by it himſelf: As Paul *rejoiced that Chriſt was preached*, though ſome did it *out of envy* to him, Phil. i. 18.

And on the other hand, he is deeply affected with other mens diſhonouring God. *Rivers of tears run down* his *eyes*, *becauſe men keep not God's law*, Pſal. cxix. 136. He mourns for abominations done in the land, which he cannot help, Ezek. ix. 4. as Hezekiah deeply reſented the blaſphemies of Rabſhaketh, Iſai. xxxvii. 1, 2, 3. And he is ready to bear his teſtimony againſt the ſins of others in all proper ways.

This is ſome draught of a tender ſpirit in its proper features.

I remains to be ſhewn,

III. What foundation is eminently laid for ſuch a temper by chriſtianity.

You ſee good men in the antient church were not ſtrangers to it; much leſs ſhould we be under the Goſpel: for, the rule of our faith and practice is more complete. Things of importance

importance to us are no longer wrapped up in figures; but "he who was in the bosom of the Father, hath revealed him," and his will.—"God hath spoken to us in these last days by his Son;" as his fullest and finishing revelation: and therefore, "if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven," Heb. xii. 25. If we are less moved and impressed by the brighter light which Christ has brought down from heaven.

The recompences of the life to come are more fully revealed to us. Indeed the church under the Old Testament was not altogether unacquainted with these: but temporal promises and threatnings were most inculcated in that dispensation, and the future recompences more darkly and sparingly. On the contrary, the eternal wrath of God against impenitent sinners, and the heavenly happiness reserved for saints, are the motives that the Gospel chiefly dwells upon. And surely the greater importance of the motives that are now principally set in our view, should make the deeper impression.

The richer discoveries of grace made in the Gospel, is a strong argument to ingenuity for promoting such a temper in us. *The grace of God that hath appeared to all men*, should soften our hearts to the most ingenuous regard to our Master's will in every thing; *his goodness should lead us to* the most kindly *repentance*. God's tender concern for our interests, so as not to spare his own Son, but to give him up

for us all, ſhould inſpire us in return with the moſt tender concern for his glory. He that continues hard and inſenſible to the gracious perſuaſions of the Goſpel, ſurely has no part left in him tender.

The ceremonial obſervances, which took up ſo much of the attention of ſerious minds while they were in force, are now ſuperſeded; and therefore the more tender ſpirit is juſtly expected with reference to the more ſubſtantial parts of religion that remain.

Eſpecially if we add, that the ſoftening ſpirit is more fully promiſed and more plentifully communicated to the church now. He muſt have been often reſiſted, and his motions greatly quenched, by any who continue hard and obſtinate under the Goſpel.

Some inferences ſhall conclude this diſcourſe.

1. We may diſcern the difference between this truly chriſtian temper, and ſome things which people are apt to miſtake for it.

It muſt not be confounded with a natural eaſineſs of temper. This is not founded upon a regard to God, nor expreſſes itſelf with diſtinction in a religious conduct; but upon all occaſions, with reaſon, or without. This indeed is a weakneſs, and not a virtue; it lays a man open to temptation from all quarters, and makes him liable to every impreſſion; to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, and drawn aſide by any ſolicitation of a tempter.

It is alſo a different thing from a mere occaſional tenderneſs under the word or providences of God. *Ahab humbled himſelf* upon God's threatnings, and *went ſoftly* for a little time,

time, 1 Kings xxi. 27. Pharoah himself did the like upon the execution of some of God's judgments in Egypt. But these were very different from the tender heart of Josiah. Their humiliation was not an habitual temper, and the fruits of it were very short-lived: Josiah's was lasting, and brought fruit to perfection. Their tenderness only shewed itself either in some good words upon a sudden conviction, or in forbearing some particular sin for the present: Josiah was led by the impression to set about an universal reformation, and to carry it to the greatest extent he could.

2. Let us all seek after and cultivate a religious tenderness of spirit. It is of indispensible necessity to our acceptance with God. What force should that declaration have, to awaken an earnest concern to be possessed of this frame, which God makes in Isa. lxvi. 2. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word?" It is a strong encouragement to our desires, and prayers, and endeavours, that such promises stand upon record; "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." If you are convinced of the necessity of this temper, take encouragement from such a declaration to pray to God for his quickening grace, and to hope that it shall not be denied in your attendance upon his appointed means.

And if your hearts are in any measure softened, labour to preserve their tenderness thro' your course. Be afraid of the beginnings of hardness of heart. Exhort and admonish yourselves

yourſelves daily, "leſt you ſhould be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin," Heb. iii. 13. Obſerve and fall in with every good motion of the Spirit of God. Endeavour to maintain an habitual tenderneſs by the frequent exerciſes of ſuch a ſpirit; eſpecially by daily ſerious reviews of your own frames and actions, and the ſpeedy exerciſes of godly ſorrow and true repentance for every thing you diſcern amiſs from time to time in your temper or behaviour to God, yourſelves, or your neighbour.

3. If you are conſcious of ſuch a ſpirit prevailing in you, take the comfort of it as a good evidence that you are in the chriſtian ſtate. As we have frequent occaſion for repentance with reference to every branch of the chriſtian temper, ſo, thanks be to God, there is room for repentance. "A broken and contrite ſpirit God will not deſpiſe," Pſal. li. 17. "Bleſſed are they that mourn, for they ſhall be comforted," Matt. v. 4. God will "have mercy on ſuch, and abundantly pardon," Iſa. lv. 7. He is "faithful and juſt to forgive them their ſins," 1 John i. 9. Though the occaſions of penitential ſorrow will not entirely ceaſe while you are in the body; yet when the hardened ſinners mourning time begins, yours will end: At the end of your trial, "God will wipe away all tears from your eyes forever," and give you the rewards promiſed to them that overcome.

S. E. R.

SERMON XVIII.

Christian Zeal.

REV. iii. 19. the middle of the verse.

—— *Be Zealous.*

ZEAL is not a particular grace or virtue by itself, but rather a qualification which should attend us in the exercise of every grace, and in the performance of every duty.

Indeed it is no virtue at all unless it be well-placed and regulated. Zeal in its general notion, is nothing else but a strong and ardent concern for or against a thing, and a lively and vigorous manner of acting thereupon. It has the denomination of a religious zeal, only as far as the objects, about which it is conversant, are of a religious nature. And even a religious zeal is no farther good and commendable, than when it is really on the side of truth and goodness; when it is measured by the importance of things, and when it is expressed and exercised by lawful and regular methods.

It is fit to be observed, that we read in Scripture of a bad zeal more frequently of the two, than of a good one; and many admonitions are given against some sort of zeal; as I shall have occasion to take notice presently. Which should make us sensible, how highly necessary it is, that a strict caution and

a very careful regulation ſhould attend our zeal.

And yet right zeal is a duty, and a needful ingredient of the Chriſtian temper, and is recommended as ſuch in the text. Chriſt from heaven calls his diſciples to it, in an addreſs particularly directed to one of the ſeven churches of Aſia, that of Laodicea.

The deſcription which he, who knew their works and character, gave of them juſt before, made this call peculiarly appoſite and ſuitable to them. He charges them in ver. 15. that they "were neither cold nor hot." They had taken upon them the profeſſion of chriſtianity, owned the truths and laws of Chriſt and their obligation from them, and ſo were not abſolutely cold: but on the other hand, there was no ſpirit in their religion, no vital influence from it; their principles were not lively and active; they did not behave as people in earneſt in what they profeſſed, who reſolved to make it the buſineſs of their lives to obſerve the chriſtian rule, and to be governed by chriſtian motives, or who determined upon an adherence to their profeſſion, whatever it ſhould coſt them. This is the charge againſt them.

Chriſt therefore declares his diſapprobation of ſuch a lukewarm temper. *I would thou waſt cold or hot:* As if he had ſaid, "You "would act more conſiſtently with your- "ſelves, and it would be more for my hon- "our, if either you would entirely quit your "chriſtian profeſſion, or elſe would be more "earneſt in the purſuit of it."

In the next verſe he expreſſes his diſplea-

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ſure in ſtronger terms, ver. 16. "So then, becauſe thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will ſpue thee out of my "mouth." "As lukewarm water turns the "ſtomach," ſo, ſays Chriſt, "lukewarm and "indifferent profeſſors of my religion make "me ſick of them, I cannot bear them; but "unleſs they repent, I will reject and caſt "them off from me."

In the 17th and 18th verſes Chriſt intimates wherein their lukewarmneſs lay, or at leaſt points to the natural fruit of it. They "thought themſelves rich, and increaſed with goods, and to have need of nothing," while their caſe was quite otherwiſe. They reckoned their profeſſion, their privileges, their poſſeſſion of ſound doctrine, or their having eſcaped common pollutions, to be enough, without the real power of godlineſs. Chriſt admoniſhes them how much they were miſtaken in their opinion of themſelves: after all, they "were wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind and naked." And therefore he graciouſly counſels them to look out for a ſupply of their wants, and to apply to him for that purpoſe, who was yet able and willing to relieve them.

And in the verſe where the text lies, he lets them know, that even ſo ſevere an admonition was the fruit of kindneſs and goodwill. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chaſten." "I have ſaid this, not as pronouncing "your condition deſperate, but faithfully to "warn you of your danger, that this negli"gence in religion may not be your ruin." "Be

zealous

zealous therefore, and repent." "Since this "is really your condition, and I have warned you, out of pure grace, of the dreadful "consequence of such a temper persisted in; "therefore repent, that you have trifled so "much hitherto, and be zealous for time to "come."

Zeal is a qualification necessary in Christ's disciples.

Upon which argument, I would, I. Explain the disposition to which we are exhorted. And, II. Shew the obligations which lie upon Christ's disciples to such a temper.

I. It is very necessary that the disposition should be explained, to which we are here exhorted. We are required to be zealous: But in other places we are warned against zeal, and the word is often used in an ill sense, and the most wicked and pernicious fruits are represented as proceeding from it. It is therefore of the greatest importance, that we should carefully attend to Scripture-light for the due stating of this matter; where we should be zealous, and where not; and what regulations our fervour should be under for the degrees and measures of it; the principal seat of it; the persons that may be concerned in it; and the proper ways of expressing it. The following particulars may help to discover our duty in this matter.

1. It should be our first care to be well assured, that the cause is good for which our zeal is employed: That is, that what we are zealous for, is really truth or duty; and that what we are zealous against, is certainly false

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or evil. "It is good to be always zealouſly affected in a good thing," Gal. iv. 18. But the greater our fervour is in a wrong way, ſo much the more hurt we are like to do to ourſelves and others. Indeed heat without light, or raſh and blind zeal, is the moſt extravagant and miſchievous thing in the world; and therefore careful examination ſhould always go before the actings of zeal. Otherwiſe we may be found fighting againſt God, when we think to do him good ſervice; and active inſtruments in the devil's ſervice through ignorance, while we flatter ourſelves that we are animated by a zeal for God. Such was the zeal ſo often taken notice of in the Jews at the beginning of Chriſtianity. They had a mighty regard for the ceremonial law, and for their ritual traditions: And becauſe the Goſpel inſiſted not on the obſervance of theſe, but directed them for acceptance with God, to faith in Chriſt, without the works of the law, they ſet themſelves againſt it with the greateſt warmth and eagerneſs. And this their bigotry and fury is called their zeal. So the original word is, where our tranſlators have rendered it by indignation or envy. So Acts v. 17, 18. "The high prieſt and his companions were filled with zeal, and laid their hands on the apoſtles, and put them in the common priſon." And chap. xiii. 45. "When the Jews ſaw the multitudes" that came to hear Paul preach, "they were filled with zeal, and ſpake againſt thoſe things that were ſpoken by Paul." And when the ſame apoſtle endeavoured to convince the Jews at Theſſalonica,

Thessalonica, that Jesus was the Messiah, Acts xvii. 5. "The Jews which believed not, moved with zeal, took unto them certain lewd fellows, and made an uproar." Here was fiery hot zeal; and the apostle assures us, that it was a zeal *of God*, or for God, Rom. x. 2. *I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God; but* then it was *not according to knowledge.* They had not examined the evidences of Christianity, and so blindly and madly opposed it. St. Paul could the better bear this testimony of his countrymen, because it had lately been his own case. He had been "exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers," Gal. i. 14. and "touching zeal, persecuting the church," Phil. iii. 6. But when he came to himself, this misplaced zeal was so far from giving him any comfort, that it was his grief and his shame: He calls himself for it a *blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious*, and even *the chief of sinners*, 1 Tim. i. 13, 15.

To be zealous for we know not what, is as bad as to worship we know not what. And however positive and confident we may be, after all our warmth, we may be on the wrong side, if our assurance be not the result of a sincere and impartial inquiry. And indeed, if we should happen to be in the right, yet a blind and random zeal, even for truth itself, cannot be acceptable to God; because it is rather by chance, than upon reasonable evidence, that our zeal is on the right side.

Every man therefore is bound, before he gives a loose to his zeal, to use the best helps

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in his power for diſcovering the mind of God: and no man ſhould ſuffer his zeal to outrun his knowledge, or to exceed the evidence he has of the truth or falſehood, of the good or evil of things.

2. Zeal ſhould bear a proportion to the value or importance of things. Indeed the leaſt truth of which we are convinced, muſt not be given up; nor ſhould we act contrary to known duty in the leaſt inſtance, upon any worldly conſideration. But all truths or duties are not of equal moment or concern either to ourſelves or others, to the honour of God or the intereſt of religion. While a warm zeal therefore is not only allowable, but commendable, in reference to matters of importance; yet there is room for the exerciſe of moderation as a virtue, in relation to things of ſmall conſequence.

This difference in the value or importance of things ſhould be meaſured, either by the plain declarations of God in his word concerning the neceſſity of ſome points of belief or practice to ſalvation; or by their obvious tendency to promote or hinder practical godlineſs, by their plain influence upon the welfare of mankind either in this or the next world.

Now really, it is no good ſign of ſincerity, much leſs of regular zeal, to be very warm and earneſt about little matters, while there is a plain coldneſs about things of the greateſt moment: to be all on fire about rituals and ceremonials, either for them or againſt them; when we are negligent and indifferent about the

the very vitals of religion: To lay a mighty ſtreſs upon doubtful things, or the mere dictates of men; and yet to make a ſmall account of the undoubted precepts of God, and even the plain dictates both of natural ond revealed religion: to be exceeding eager upon ſuch points as are confeſſed by all thinking men to be attended with great obſcurity and difficulties, upon knotty and perplexing queſtions; but ſlightly to paſs over the clear and obvious truths and duties of religion; This is an untoward and a monſtrous zeal. Nothing indeed which appears to bear the ſtamp of divine authority, is to be received by us with an abſolute indifference: But as God has laid a different ſtreſs upon things, ſo ſhould we, and endeavour to follow his declared judgment of their importauce as near as we can. We ſhall do well in this caſe to lay to heart Chriſt's reproof to the Scribes and Phariſees, in Matth xxiii. 23, 24. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and anniſe, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: Theſe things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which ſtrain at a gnat, and ſwallow a camel."

3. Zeal is firſt to be conſidered in the temper of the ſoul, and then in the proper expreſſions of it in the tenor of the practice. It ſtands in the firſt place oppoſed to indifference or lukewarmneſs in the heart and affections.

So it is eminently to be underſtood in the text,

text, as appears from the context. But if there be inward life and vigour, this ought to be and will be expressed by correspondent effects in practice: And so zeal stands opposed to slothfulness, Rom. xii. 11. "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." It is the reverse of *doing the work of the Lord negligently*, of every thing in the outward course that might discover a coldness in affection to God, or in resolution for him, or in hatred of sin, or in our regards to God's honour and interest.

Now though one man cannot judge of another's zeal, more than of any other inward disposition, by any measure beside visible and becoming fruits; yet the fervour of the soul is principally to be considered with respect to divine acceptance. No seeming warmth of zeal for God in pious discourse, no appearance of vigorous acting for him, will pass with God for any thing better than hypocrisy, if all be not animated with the inward fire of holy zeal. It is not enough *with the mouth to shew much love to God*, if *the heart goeth after covetousness*, or something else more than God, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. To be forward and ready in religious conversation, to lament the sins of the times, and the decay of piety, is a becoming instance of christian zeal; and charity, without good evidence to the contrary, will induce us to believe concerning another, that *out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh*: But if he who knows all things, should know it to be otherwise, he will abhor the vile dissimulation. To be diligent in attend-

ance upon the institutions of divine worship; to be active in endeavours to propagate God's truths and interest, and to prevent the progress of sin and error, are natural fruits of religious zeal: But if we should only design thereby to approve ourselves to men; if the language of our hearts should be like Jehu's "Come see my zeal for the Lord," 2 Kings x. 16. this is vain ostentation, and not holy zeal.

4. The first and principal province of christian zeal is in relation to ourselves: And to other people only in the second place, as we have only a secondary concern in them.

I am afraid by this observation I meet with a very common mistake among people that speak much in commendation of zeal; I doubt they consider it, as if it chiefly related to the conduct of other people rather than to their own. But in truth, though the province of zeal extends farther than ourselves, yet not only its first, but its main business is at home. Zeal, as well as charity, is to begin here; in keeping up the fervour of our own spirits in religion, and the intenseness of our own personal obedience.

It should principally operate in ardent desires and endeavours after the increase of light and useful knowledge in our own minds; in "following on to know the Lord, increasing in the knowledge of God" and his will; that we may know our duty better, in order to the direction of our practice; and be more fully instructed in the truths of the Gospel, that our persuasion of them may be firmer, and

their

their influence more ſtrong and forcible upon our ſouls.

Chriſtian zeal is the ſprightly vigour and ſtrenuous activity of every holy affection and diſpoſition; and earneſtneſs and intenſeneſs in every ſpiritual act of faith and love, of hope and truſt, of reſignation to God and reſolution for him. It is the performance of every act of devotion with life and cloſe application of thought, as thoſe who are in earneſt in it: and with the exerciſe of thoſe pious diſpoſitions which are ſuitable to it. To praiſe God with admiring and adoring thoughts of his excellencies, with inward gratitude for his benefits, and with a lively ſenſe of our own unworthineſs: To confeſs our ſins, with a truly broken and contrite ſpirit, with pungent ſhame and ſorrow for them, and with vigorous reſolutions againſt them: To "pour out our hearts" in prayer, to "labour fervently in it," as the expreſſion is, Col. iv. 12. with the *fervent or inworking prayer of a righteous man*: This is to be zealous in religion. To "deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby;" to come to all the means of grace with an aim to receive advantage by them, with a concern to exerciſe every proper holy affection in them, and to obtain the acceptance of them; this is true fervour in devotion.

We are alſo to be "zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. Every thing that is praiſeworthy and commendable, all that may contribute to the honour of God or the good of mankind. To be zealous of them, is to be very

very forward to engage in them, chearful in performing them, solicitous to do our utmost in them, that they may be more for quantity and better for quality than hitherto. This is to "do whatever our hands finds to do, with our might," Eccl ix. 10. to "do it heartily," Col. iii. 23. to "abound in every good work," 1 Cor. xv. 58. to "be rich in good works," 1 Tim. vi. 18. which are so many expressions describing holy zeal.

Zeal is to be shewn in endeavouring to outstrip others in every grace and virtue. This is a noble emulation. We find the word *zeal* once translated *emulations* in a criminal sense, and ranked among *the works of the flesh*, Gal. v. 20. By emulation or zeal there, the apostle seems to mean envying our neighbour, either for his greater share of worldly enjoyments, or of useful gifts. Envy is always bad. And the word zeal is often so translated in the New Testament, Rom. xiii. 13. "Let us walk—not in strife and envying, or zeal," 1 Cor. iii. 3. "Whereas there is among you zeal, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?" And we are told, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. "Charity envieth not;" in the Greek, is not zealous. We are neither to envy the wealth, nor reputation, nor gifts, nor graces of others. But it is a laudable zeal to aspire to the highest attainments in goodness, and to be excited to the greater ardour by all that we see excellent in them; that we may become such examples ourselves, "that our zeal may provoke very many;" as the apostle tells the Corinthians that their zeal in acts of charity did, 2 Cor. ix. 2. Thus

Thus our zeal ſhould be firſt employed about ourſelves. Here we ſhould be warmeſt in concern, and endeavour that we ourſelves may daily become wiſer and better, that we may pull out every beam or mote out of our own eyes. And if people were thus in earneſt zealous at home, a great deal of irregular zeal to others would be prevented. But then,

5. Chriſtian zeal is not to be confined at home, to our own perſonal goodneſs; but has ſtill a wider ſcope. If it is employed abroad, while our own vineyard is not kept, it is a falſe pretence, and juſtly offenſive to God and man. But the due exerciſe of it for our own conduct being preſuppoſed, there is a large field for its exerciſe ſtill behind.

We find many inſtances of zeal in relation to other men recommended in Scripture. Phinehas is praiſed, that he was zealous for his God, and ſhewed it by executing judgment upon an Iſraelite and a Moabitiſh woman for notorious debauchery, Numb. xxv. 7, 8, 11, 12. So St. "Paul's ſpirit was ſtirred in him, when he ſaw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry," Acts xvii. 16. We are commanded to "contend earneſtly for the faith once delivered to the ſaints," when it is oppoſed by men of corrupt minds, Jude 3. Error and ſin, wherever we ſee them, call for the exerciſe of our zeal againſt them. Chriſt gives it as a ſingular commendation of the church of Epheſus, that they "could not bear with them that were evil," Rev. ii. 2.

It may be proper to ſhew more particular-

ly the due regulations and expressions of our zeal upon account of what we may see amiss in others. And,

First, What would be irregular in the exercise of our zeal.

(1.) While we express christian zeal, we should take heed of uncharitableness: that we pass not rash and too severe censures upon mens character, even when we cannot but judge some of their opinions erroneous, or some of their actions faulty. There has been a great deal of this false fire in the christian world: Christians have often been hereticating and anathematizing one another for matters of doubtful disputation or mere human decisions, as if all religion lay at stake; when the mistake on either hand may consist with their being good Christians. Or if a man has been guilty of an irregular action; it is too common to condemn him hastily for a bad man, and overlook all that is commendable in him, upon that account; when this is but a single and occasional act, and contrary to his habitual character. On the other hand, while we heartily condemn sin and error according to the best of our light; we must not take upon us to cast men out of the christian pale, where we have no good warrant to exclude them from the word of God.

(2.) In our zeal against what is amiss in others, we should be careful that we become not transgressors ourselves. So we shall be, if we suffer ourselves to be transported into passion, and join not meekness with our zeal. When the people of Israel sinfully murmured

ed against God and Moses for want of water in the wilderness, Moses was too far transported with anger, and spake unadvisedly with his lips; "Hear now," says he, "ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Numb. xx. 10. For this, as a mark of displeasure, God denied Moses an entrance into Canaan, ver. 12. And we shall be much more transgressors, if our zeal against mens supposed or real errors or sins degenerates into hatred and ill-will to their persons. We are *not to hate them*, though we are *not to suffer sin to lie upon them*, Lev. xix. 17. This is that *bitter zeal* spoken of by St. James, chap. iii. 14. of which he says, ver. 15. that it "descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."

(3.) We should not in our zeal use any methods to advance even God's truth and interest, or to suppress errors and disorders, for which our master gives us no warrant. Zeal for truth will not justify the use of the civil sword to punish men for a mistaken conscience; when this is not the way to enlighten mens minds, or change their judgments; when Christ and his apostles have intimated no other method for propagating the truth, but fair reasoning and argument; when Christ discountenances even such a zeal as calls for fire from heaven against his worst enemies, Luke ix. 54, 55. Certainly imprisonments and banishments, fire and faggot, are none of his ways to suppress error.

(4.) Regular zeal will not lead men to bear testimony against the sins of men in any way which is not warrantable in their stations.

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How fit and necessary soever it is, that open vice should receive punishment, as the bane of society; yet it would be an irregular zeal in private persons to take the magistrate's work out of his hand, and pretend to do this themselves. If any should imagine themselves countenanced in such zeal by the case of Phinehas, when he executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi; a little consideration will shew the vanity of such a plea. Phinehas was himself a ruler or judge, as we are told, 1 Chron. ix. 20. and an order had been delivered for such an execution by Moses the chief magistrate, Numb. xxv. 5. "Moses said to the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his man." The crime was capital by law, the fact was notorious, and Phinehas had a commission from Moses to inflict the legal punishment. Nothing therefore can give less countenance to wild and extravagant zeal in private persons, than this instance, wherein a magistrate was performing the duty of his place, and his proceedings were regular and orderly: But that which made his zeal so commendable, was, that he ventured to execute this judgment in the face of the whole congregation of Israel, when the infection was become general, and the number of offenders made it dangerous to do justice.

(5.) Right zeal should not burn with equal fervour in all cases. Public and open offenders are much more intolerable, than those who keep within the bounds of privacy; such as declare their sin as Sodom, and have been long accustomed to do evil, more than young offenders, who are drawn in by others, and

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are ſtill willing to hearken to better counſel; Jude 22, 23. "Of ſome have compaſſion, making a difference: And others ſave with fear, pulling them out of the fire." A partial reſpect of perſons is unworthy a holy zeal; but a prudent diſtinction of perſons according to the degrees of guilt and obſtinacy, is very well conſiſtent with it.

Secondly, I would ſhew what zeal for God in reference to other people's conduct becomes a chriſtian.

(1.) We ſhould be affected with proportionable concern at what we judge amiſs in others. Zeal will not allow us to ſay, "Am I my brother's keeper?" as long as we apprehend any thing in him that greatly diſhonours God, or endangers his own ſoul; but will awaken concern and ſorrow upon ſuch an occaſion. Such was the temper of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. cxix. 136. "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, becauſe men keep not thy law." Verſe 158. "I beheld the tranſgreſſors, and was grieved." And of Lot, who was "vexed with the filthy converſation of the wicked," 2 Pet. ii. 8. And of Paul, when his ſpirit was ſtirred at the ſight of the Athenian idolatry.

(2.) We ſhould expreſs our diſlike and diſapprobation, when the evils of others come in our way. Zeal will induce to reprove ſin, where we can have any hope to reclaim the ſinner, or to ſtop the progreſs of ſin, or to prevent the infection of others thereby; or if we have reaſon to apprehend that ſilence will be interpreted for connivance and approbation: "Have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works

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of darkness, but reprove them rather," Eph. v. 11. Indeed if we should be cast among known and impudent scorners, possibly silence itself may be one of the best ways of reproving them.

(3.) We should chearfully and vigorously use the best means in our power for the good of others. Zeal for God, and for the welfare of others will inspire every man in his private capacity, to endeavour to prevent the infection of those under his care and charge, or to recover them if possible, by faithful instruction and admonition. It will engage ministers to fervour in their preaching, and diligence in their stations to convert sinners, to convince gainsayers, to defend the truth, to recover the fallen, and to stir up all to love and to good works. It will spirit magistrates to put the laws of their country into execution against notorious transgressors; "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and the disobedient," &c. 1 Tim. i. 9, 10. It was not enough in Eli, as a parent, to admonish his sons of their notorious crimes: Though they were now grown up, yet he was a magistrate; and in that capacity should have punished them as well as others for their enormous crimes. God so highly resented his neglect herein, that he calls it despising him, and brought vengeance on him and his house for it. The same principle of zeal should dispose private persons to assist the magistrate in endeavours for reformation of manners, by bringing open offenders within his cognizance; without which his hand

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cannot reach them, and laws must be an useless thing. "Both a partner with a thief, and he that heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not, wrong their own souls," Prov. xxix. 24.

(4.) We should not chuse to make ill men our chosen companions, farther than necessity requires. Zeal against sin, and indeed for the safety of our own souls, will carry us not to like and chuse their society; not to take pleasure in being where God is openly dishonoured. Instead of that, we should chuse with David to be "companions of them that fear God, and of those that keep his precepts," Ps. cxix. 63. And especially for that reason, to constitute our families, if possible, of such: as in Ps. ci. 4. "A froward heart shall depart from me, I will not know a wicked person." ver. 6, 7. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight."

II. I proceed in the second place to mention some of the obligations which lie upon Christ's disciples to be regularly zealous.

1. The importance of religion deserves our zeal. It is that wherein the honour of God, the present welfare of the world, and the everlasting interest of ourselves and others is more concerned than in any thing else. And where then should zeal and fervour be employed, if not here?

2. The difficulties that attend religion, make zeal necessary. There are many indispositions

tions within ourselves, and many oppositions from without, that will never be surmounted without a holy fervour. When we are remiss, our enemies are vigilant and active. Indeed the maintenance of a right zeal is of the utmost consequence for our own security against infection by the many evils around us. It is an easy transition from conversing with sin and sinners with indifference, to learn their ways, and become like unto them. By this means people of a sober education are gradually drawn off from wisdom's ways.

3. Sincerity in religion obliges to zeal. If we love God, we shall hate evil, Psal. xcvii. 10. And so great is his excellence, and sin's evil, that if our affection be right set between both, we cannot remain cold and indifferent for the one or against the other.

4. The end of religion, divine acceptance, cannot be obtained without zeal. Christ plainly declares this in the context; where he threatens the Laodiceans with utter rejection, because they were neither cold nor hot; and therefore calls them to repentance, and to resume a warmth and spirit in religion, as ever they would avoid so dreadful a doom.

5. The exercise of regular zeal is the most likely way to do good to others. Not indeed when we treat them with supercilious contempt, or with a peevish moroseness; or when pretended zeal breaks in upon the offices of humanity, civility or charity. But if they see, along with all the marks of love and good-will to their persons, that we are in earnest in religion ourselves; that we dare not

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run with them to the ſame exceſs of riot, nor comply with them in their ſins and errors: it is natural to enquire in ſuch a caſe, why do theſe people act againſt the ſtream of the world? why will not they allow themſelves to behave as we do? why do they ſhew uneaſineſs, when we ſpeak profanely or act looſely? why do they chuſe to expoſe themſelves to cenſure and diſlike? If this be a ſteady conduct, joined with the expreſſions of benevolence and civility upon other occaſions, God may lead them to ſee, that we dare not go their lengths becauſe of the fear of the Lord; and it may diſpoſe them to conſideration, and to hear with patience what we have to offer for God and religion.

6. Zeal is eminently recommended by the example of the great head of our religion, the Lord Jeſus. As man and mediator, he was always fervent in his courſe of obedience. "I muſt," ſays he, "work the work of him that ſent me, while it is day," John ix. 4. He expreſſed the moſt vigorous concern for the honour of God, and for all that belonged to him; whereby the evangeliſt takes notice, that that antient paſſage ſpoken in his perſon in a prophetical Pſalm, was accompliſhed; "The zeal of thine houſe hath eaten me up," John ii. 17. How ardent was his love to ſouls, and his zeal againſt ſin upon all occaſions? We are obliged to learn this, as well as other graces of him; to be zealous in the work aſſigned to us, as he was in his; to be zealous and active for God in our ſtations; and to have his intereſt much at heart, as he had ours.

Upon the whole,

1. We ſhould ſeriouſly examine how we comply with this exhortation, or whether the character which our Lord had reproved in the context, be our character. Have we ever to this day begun to be in earneſt in religion, or only made it a by-buſineſs? Is any zeal we ſeem to expreſs, the mere fruit of a natural warmth of temper, or the fruit of religious principles? Is it a godly zeal? 2 Cor. xi. 2. a zeal for God, founded on the authority of God, and directed by the will of God? Is our warmeſt zeal for the ſubſtantial and moſt indiſputable parts of religion? Is our zeal firſt, moſt conſtantly, and moſt earneſtly ſpent upon the advancement of the power and practice of godlineſs in ourſelves? Have we not left our firſt love? Have we not abated in the life and vigour of holy diſpoſitions, of pious reſolutions? in the ſpirituality of the acts of devotion? in tender fear of ſin, and watchfulneſs againſt it? in endeavours to do good? Theſe are enquiries of the greateſt concern to all that call themſelves Chriſtians.

2. We ſhould heartily and ſpeedily repent, according to the evidence againſt us, which conſcience gives in upon inquiry. If we have lived long under the Goſpel, and never felt its vital quickening heat, but have remained dead to this day; is it not high time to ariſe from the dead? to bewail our paſt ſtupidity, and miſerable trifling in the matters of our ſouls; and before it is too late, to turn the main ſtream of our concern and care to our everlaſting intereſts and the means of ſecuring them?

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If there was once some holy fervour begun, but it is not with us now as in days past; let us "remember from whence we are fallen, and repent, and do our first works," Rev. ii. 5. How ungrateful and aggravated is such a declension in those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious? shall the avowed servants of sin and Satan be more zealous in the way to death, than the professed servants of Christ in their way to heaven? It may be we were once very zealous and active for sin; let the thought of that quicken our zeal now in a better way. If we remit our fervour, the state of our souls will suffer unspeakable loss, the pleasure and relish of every duty will proportionably abate; our zeal itself is like to take another course, for it will be exercised one way or another; and if we should be saved upon repentance at last, it will be as by fire.

Let us therefore frequently converse with the word of God, by which our zeal is to be excited and regulated; often represent to ourselves the great motives of the Gospel; the fervour of redeeming love, the constant observation of God, the danger of apostacy, the shortness of time, the greatness and nearness of the reward, if we faint not: and along with all, often pray for the light and quickening influences of the divine Spirit. So religion will have power in us now, the peace of God will rule in our hearts, and we shall be able to go with full sails to glory.

SER-

SERMON XIX.

Christian Prudence.

MATTH. x. 16.

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

OUR blessed Saviour observes, that "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light," Luke xvi. 8. that is, it is too commonly true, that those who have chosen their portion in this life, use more prudence to gain their end, than people who have had the wisdom to determine upon a better happiness, do in pursuit of their nobler end. This is too often fact, but at the same time is no small reproach upon Christians: They should use as much wisdom in prosecution of their end, as they did in the choice of it; and have need of wisdom in the management of the christian life, in which they are engaged, as much as worldly men have to compass their aims below. The following discourse is to be upon this argument of christian prudence, for which the words of the text may be a proper foundation.

They are a part of Christ's instructions to his apostles, when he sent them out only upon a special

a ſpecial commiſſion in Judea: But ſeveral of the inſtructions ſeem much more to point forward to events that ſhould befal them in the execution of a more general commiſſion, which they were to receive after Chriſt's aſcenſion. Thus particularly, the warning he gives them of difficulties, dangers and perſecutions that awaited them, and the directions for their conduct in them, are to be underſtood. Theſe begin in the text. Wherein Chriſt firſt repreſents the dangerous ſtate they would be in. "I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves." They would find the generality of the world about them like wolves, ready to devour and make a prey; and they would be as ſheep in the midſt of theſe wolves, very unable of themſelves to reſiſt their rage, and of ſo contrary a nature and diſpoſition to them, that for that reaſon they might expect to be the more violently hated by them.

In ſuch circumſtances Chriſt gives them a double advice. "Be wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves." It is ſaid in Gen. iii. 1. that "the ſerpent was wiſer than any beaſt of the field." Though that is principally meant of the old ſerpent, yet an alluſion ſeems intended to the ſagacity of the animal itſelf, of which naturaliſts have obſerved ſeveral inſtances: and from thence our Saviour ſeems to uſe the wiſdom of the ſerpent as a proverbial phraſe. On the other hand, the dove is noted for one of the moſt harmleſs birds, as the ſheep is among the beaſts. Chriſt directs his diſciples to unite theſe two things in their conduct, wiſdom or prudence, and innocence.

The lot of good men in all ages bears ſome reſemblance to the caſe of the apoſtles as deſcribed here; and therefore the direction may be conſidered as of general uſe. We find another very like it laid down by the apoſtle, 1 Cor. xiv. 20. "Brethren, be not children in underſtanding: Howbeit in malice, or evil, be ye children, but in underſtanding be men."

Upon this head, I would, I. Briefly explain the double direction given us. II. Point at ſome principal inſtances wherein we ſhall find chriſtian prudence, in conjunction with innocence, very neceſſary and ſerviceable. And, III. Inforce the exhortation from the deſcription given of our ſtate in this world.

I. I would briefly explain the double direction given us. And I chuſe to begin with the laſt, becauſe the wiſdom to which we are directed cannot well be explained without firſt conſidering the other.

1. We are required to be harmleſs. We find the original word only twice beſides in the New Teſtament: In Rom. xvi. 19. where it is rendered, SIMPLE concerning evil: And in Phil. ii. 15. where it is tranſlated as here, harmleſs. Several accounts are given of the derivation of the word; but I apprehend the moſt probable to be, that it is a metaphor taken from *unruly beaſts that puſh with their horns. The deſign of it is well expreſſed by

* Ἀκεραίοις. Ακεραος, cornutus. Metapnora ſumpta a beſtiis cornutis. Conſtantin. Lexic.

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our tranſlation, harmleſs. This ſhould be the firſt care of every Chriſtian that he be inoffenſive in his whole conduct, or, as St. Paul ſays, may "keep a conſcience void of offence both toward God and toward men;" and I may add, toward ourſelves alſo.

It ſhould be our care with reſpect to God, that we wrong not him of his rights, by neglecting any part of the homage and allegiance that we owe him. A ſinner is repreſented by Eliphaz in a phraſe not unſuitable to that in the text, as "running upon God, even on his neck, upon the thick boſſes of his buckler," Job xv. 26. He is indeed altogether above receiving any real prejudice from us; but ſin is acting againſt him, as much as it is in our power to do; it is a wrong and injuſtice offered him. Here therefore we ſhould ſtudy to be inoffenſive.

With reſpect to our neighbour, we ſhould be careful that we give no juſt ground of offence; by denying him any of his juſt claims from us, or depriving him of his rights, either in his perſon or ſubſtance, or reputation. "Thy wickedneſs may hurt a man as thou art," in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, Job. xxxv. 8. Being harmleſs in common acceptation principally relates to our neighbour. But beſides this,

We have a farther concern in relation to ourſelves; that whatever we do, we wrong not our own ſouls, but are true to their intereſts, to their preſent peace and purity, and their everlaſting happineſs. And that a due proviſion be made for our temporal well-being

ing as far as may be consistent with our superior engagements.

This is the harmlessness or innocence which we should make it our business to maintain; that our duty to all in the several relations wherein we stand, may be conscientiously and inviolably observed. And now it will be easy to discern what is intended by the other part of the direction.

2. We are required to be wise as serpents. And as this stands in connexion with the former particular, we may plainly collect two things for explaining it.

(1.) That no rules of policy are to be observed, which are inconsistent with innocence and a good conscience. The most prudential methods can be thought of to compass a bad end, or those which may bear the most promising aspect of success in order to obtain a good end, if they are known to be unlawful, are alike abomination to God, and should be so to every good man; for in both there is the wisdom of the serpent without the innocence of the dove. Trick and falsehood, cunning craftiness, as the Scripture calls it, is a very different thing from christian prudence. It is *the wisdom of this world*, which *is foolishness with God*, 1 Cor. iii. 19. *Fleshly wisdom*, which stands opposed to *simplicity and godly sincerity*, 2 Cor. i. 12. or the *wisdom* which St. James pronounces to be *earthly*, *sensual*, *devilish*, James iii. 15. Not the laudable wisdom of the serpent, but the wicked craft of the old serpent. Known duty is a line beyond which we must not suffer ourselves

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to go upon any pretence of convenience or prudence.

(2.) The wiſdom to which we are directed, is that by which we may moſt effectually be enabled to diſcern and diſcharge our duty. It preſuppoſes a conſcientious regard to duty, a hearty deſire to know and practice it. And the province of Chriſtian prudence is only to ſecond this deſign, to facilitate and improve the performance: When we have fixed a right end, to find out the moſt ſuitable means for attaining it: To judge of the proper times and ſeaſons of things, as every thing is beautiful in its ſeaſon, and that one branch of duty may not interfere with another: To conſider the circumſtances of providence from time to time, and ſo to diſcern our preſent duty, and bear fruit in ſeaſon: To weigh the circumſtances of caſes as they occur, which may ſometimes make it difficult to diſcover on which ſide of a queſtion duty lies; and ſo to direct and guide our practice.

The Scripture ſpeaks of ſome, Jer. iv. 22. who "were wiſe to do evil, but to do good they had no knowledge:" They ſhewed a great deal of art and cunning in the management of their wicked practices, but were moſt unfurniſhed and unexpert for the performance of any thing truly commendable. In oppoſition to ſuch a character, the apoſtle expreſſes his wiſhes for the Romans, Rom. xvi. 19. "I would have you wiſe to that which is good, and ſimple concerning evil." Which is a good expoſition of our Saviour's direction in the text. "The wiſdom of the prudent

dent is to understand his way," Prov. xiv. 8. First and principally to learn the way to heaven, which is prescribed to all; and then the way of particular duty, according to our special and distinguishing circumstances: And to understand the best means of performing our duty, in order to reach the end proposed in it; as it is said, Eccl. viii. 5. "A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment."

This is the general view of the wisdom or prudence recommended.

II. I would now consider some principal instances, wherein we shall find christian prudence, in conjunction with innocence, very necessary and serviceable. And we may take a short view of the three great branches of our duty to this purpose.

1. Prudence, as well as conscientiousness, is necessary in the exercise of godliness, or our direct duty to God himself. An honest upright heart, truly devoted to God, though it is the principal thing, yet will need the aids of prudence to facilitate the practice of piety, to promote the pleasure and the lustre of it.

We must not omit any branch of real piety, or of the due homage which God requires from us, to avoid the reproaches of profane people; nor make it our main end in religious exercises to be seen of men: that would be carnal policy. But it is christian prudence to avoid any such indecencies in our outward behaviour in sacred exercises, as may unnecessarily give men offence, or a handle for reproach and censure. By this means we are most likely to honour God, and recommend his ways to men.

Wisdom

Wiſdom is alſo profitable to direct to the proper ſeaſons for the exerciſe of the ſeveral holy diſpoſitions, of which piety conſiſts: that God may have the acknowledgments from us, which his providences and our condition from time to time require. There is a peculiar ſeaſonableneſs and propriety in the exerciſe of ſome gracious diſpoſitions and in ſome branches of worſhip, at ſpecial times and under particular circumſtances: and it is a part of prudence to obſerve theſe, and judge aright of them, and to direct the frame and actions accordingly. We are directed "in the day of proſperity to be joyful, and in the day of adverſity to conſider," Eccl. vii. 14. And God blames Iſrael for the unſuitableneſs of their behaviour to their circumſtances, Iſai. xxii. 12. 13. "In that day did the Lord God of hoſts call to weeping and to mourning; and to baldneſs and to girding with ſackcloth: And behold joy and gladneſs, ſlaying oxen, and killing ſheep, eating fleſh and drinking wine." There is a time to weep, and a time to mourn; and graces and duties eminently ſuited to both conditions. We are eſpecially called to awful fear, when God's judgments are abroad; to humble ourſelves under his mighty hand, when it is laid upon us; to practiſe ſubmiſſion and patience under his corrections; and truſt in him in dark and diſtreſſing circumſtances: On the other hand, the ſmiles of his providence, and the light of his countenance ſhould ſummon up the lively actings of joy and gratitude, of love and delight. Some ſeaſons eſpecially call for prayer, and others for praiſe: James v. 13.

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"Is any man afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him ſing pſalms." Every pious affection and exerciſe is moſt amiable in itſelf, and moſt acceptable to God, when it is ſeaſonable and ſuitable to mens preſent caſe. And it is a conſiderable part of chriſtian prudence carefully to attend to this.

And it is alſo of uſe for regulating the time, and manner, and length of our devotions, ſo as may beſt anſwer the end of them, the promotion of real piety in ourſelves or others. There is no ſtated and preſcribed rule for theſe things; nor can any particular direction be given which will ſuit all. The determination of it muſt be left to prudence, animated by a lively zeal to ſecure the great end. Thus, in ſecret devotions, the general rule for all is, that Chriſtians manage them ſo as may be moſt for the benefit of their own ſouls. Prudence, under the conduct of a heart truly devoted to God, muſt direct how it is moſt likely that this end may be anſwered, according to a man's conſtitution and circumſtances in the world. For the time, it muſt be a rule of prudence ordinarily to be obſerved, that for duties which are ſtatedly to return, a ſtated time in the morning and the evening ſhould be pitched upon as that which we intend commonly to employ this way, farther than extraordinary occaſions may make an exception; and this ſuch a time, wherein upon the knowledge of our own conſtitutions and buſineſs we may expect to be moſt lively and leaſt interrupted; for a truly pious mind will not content himſelf commonly to put God and his ſoul off with the dregs of

of his time and spirits. For the manner, prudence, aiming at the great end of piety, must still be our guide. As suppose for the posture used, whether prostration, or kneeling, or standing; we should chuse that wherein our minds are most free, and least liable to discomposure. By the same measure we should be conducted, either to use the voice, when privacy will admit of it, or to forbear it: And I may add also, either wholly to address to God in such thoughts and expressions as our own hearts suggest, or at some times to use the assistance of pious forms or hints prepared by others, when our own minds may not be in the best frame. For the length of them, prudence must direct too: And I believe most people will find it ordinarily expedient, that their devotions should rather be frequent than long; that at least the length of them should be proportioned to the fervour and seriousness of the spirit. In the social duties of religion, we are concerned to mind the good of others as well as of our own souls; and therefore christian prudence must consult that. We should adjust the time of our family devotions as may best comport with the general edification of the members of it; if possible when they can be all present, and when they are likely to be least sluggish and indispos'd. The matter of our addresses should be things of the most common concern to all, and suitable to the circumstances of the family as such. Care should be taken in the manner and expressions, that as far as possible, it may not be justly exceptionable. And here espe-

cially in the daily ſervice of God in our families, tedioufneſs is carefully to be avoided; want of prudence in which, I doubt many children and ſervants in pious families have been led to diſguſt religion more than otherwiſe they would have done.

2. Prudence is equally neceſſary to accompany zeal and goodneſs, in performing our duty to ourſelves.

In the firſt and fundamental part of it, the immediate care of our ſouls. This cannot be well done without chriſtian prudence. To become well acquainted with the biaſs of our conſtitutions and natural tempers, which belongs to prudence, will give us the principal light to diſcern the ſins that moſt eaſily beſet us, and the beſt methods of eſcaping them; and to diſcover the graces and virtues wherein we have the beſt proſpect of ſhining. The more we diſcern the devices of Satan, we ſhall be the better prepared to obviate them: for if we are *ignorant of them*, he is like to *gain an advantage over us*, 2 Cor. ii. 11. Prudence muſt point us to the happy and advantageous ſeaſons, the promiſing minutes, which may be moſt ſucceſsfully improved for ſtrengthening our good habits, and mortifying the ſeveral irregular diſpoſitions that attend us. Prudence deſcries the temptations which are apt to excite our irregular appetites, and directs us to avoid them: Whereas if without it we raſhly enter into temptation, how difficult is it to preſerve our innocence?

In making the intereſts of ſoul and body conſiſtent, as far as poſſible, prudence is of vaſt

vaſt ſervice. We muſt not neglect the care of our bodies while we ſojourn in them; but endeavour as far as is practicable, to make the welfare of ſoul and body to comport together. And this end might in many caſes be obtained by the exerciſe of chriſtian prudence, far more than ſome good men reach it, or than worldly men think practicable. By a prudent obſervation and improvement of the proper times and ſeaſons for both, there would be room in the ordinary ſtate of things for all the diligence in men's worldly buſineſs that can reaſonably be deſired, and yet their better intereſts not be neglected. If men would but obſerve God's rule for the ſtrict obſervation of the Lord's-day, they would not find that to interfere with a cloſe application to their ſecular buſineſs on other days, nor to their ſucceſs in it; and yet they might be able to preſerve the ſtrongeſt affection for things above. Nor would it be difficult with a little prudent forecaſt, or the "ordering of their affairs with diſcretion," ſo to manage them, that convenient time might be found on every day for the worſhip of God in private, and in their families, and ſometimes occaſionally in public worſhip, without any detriment to their outward intereſt. Experience ſhews this daily in many inſtances of people who carry on their trades and worldly buſineſs with the greateſt ſucceſs; and yet are very diligent for their ſouls too in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon.

Thus, by innocent prudence we may often avoid temporal inconveniences for our profeſſion;

feſſion; which we ſhould endeavour to do, as far as may be done without intrenching upon a good conſcience. This is the particular caſe referred to in the text, the eſcaping of perſecution, as far as it may lawfully be avoided. Sometimes it is impoſſible to be ſtaved off without making ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience; and then all regards to the body muſt give place to the everlaſting intereſt of our ſouls. So Chriſt exhorts in this chapter, ver. 28. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the ſoul; but rather fear him which is able to deſtroy both ſoul and body in hell." But ſometimes we may avoid ſuffering in a time of perſecution without violating duty, and we are directed to uſe any wiſdom of the ſerpent for that purpoſe conſiſtent with integrity; particularly if we can eſcape it by flight, ver. 23. "When they perſecute you in this city, flee ye into another." To the ſame purpoſe, Prov. xxii. 3. "A prudent man foreſeeth the evil, and hideth himſelf." This is an ordinary rule, though it may admit of exceptions, as Nehemiah ſaid, "Should ſuch a man as I flee?" Neh. vi. 11. Being the ſupreme magiſtrate at Jeruſalem, by whoſe influence and encouragement the Jews were chiefly animated in their work, and foreſeeing that if he forſook them, they would quit their work and fly too; in this caſe he reſolved to run all riſques. The ſame may be the caſe of ſome of a public character in time of perſecution; they may be ſo circumſtanced, that it may not conſiſt with duty to fly.

fly. But prudence, upon an impartial weighing of the particular circumstances, must direct in this matter.

Prudence at least will contribute one way very much to our safety from many sufferings. As far as we are governed by it, we shall not expose ourselves to sufferings by mere imprudences; which indeed give rise to many instances of unkind usage. Christian prudence will take away the occasions of ill-treatment on any other account than as Christians; it will not allow us to suffer as busy bodies, or upon account of needless provocations. And I doubt good men too often heighten the ill-will of others against them by such means.

3. Prudence is yet farther necessary to the regular and successful discharge of our duty to our neighbours. Innumerable instances might be produced on this head; I shall only single out a few.

Prudence should attend our sincere endeavours to do good to the souls of men. Most men are so indifferent about their best interests, and so ready to misinterpret the most honest methods taken for that purpose, that some policy and prudence must be used to make such charitable endeavours to go down. He who would soon hope to succeed in instructing of the ignorant, or convincing of gainsayers, or reforming of the vicious, must take some pains to render himself acceptable, as far as that may be done without sinful compliances. *The preacher* must *seek to find out acceptable words;* only he must be

careful that they be *upright, even words of truth*, Eccl. xii. 10. He must be content, out of a desire of doing good, to imitate St. Paul's example, 1 Cor. ix. 20—22. "Unto the Jews I became a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: To them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law: To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ;) that I might gain them that are without law: To the weak, I became as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." That is, he was ready to condescend to the capacities, humours and prepossessions of all with whom he had a concern, as far as his duty to his master would allow, in order to be a successful instrument for their good: and so must every faithful minister be content to do, who has the service of Christ and souls at heart. And Christians in a private station should study to "please their neighbour for his good to edification," Rom. xv. 2. To accommodate themselves by all easiness of behaviour and prudent address to other people, that they may be the more capable of serving them in their everlasting interests.

There is one instance of usefulness to others which is made a general duty upon Christians, "reproving them for their sins;" but possibly there is not more prudence requisite in the discharge of any one part of religion. A reproof may be thrown away, where it will do more hurt than good; Prov. ix. 7, 8.

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"He that reproveth a scorner, gets to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, gets to himself a blot: Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man and he will love thee." If you see a man desperate in sin so as to mock at reproof, it is a vain thing to reprove him any longer; you would but provoke him to add sin to sin, and expose yourself to needless trouble, without serving any good end by it. But there may be some hope of success in reproving a wise man; one who has yet some commendable modesty remaining, and will patiently give you the hearing. Prudence must make a proper distinction of persons; and it must direct to the fittest opportunities: as to reprove in private for more private offences; and to observe peoples most serious and tender minutes, to take the advantage of convictions or awakening providences; and in like manner to suit a reproof to mens different tempers, capacities and stations. "A word fitly spoken, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear," Prov. xxv. 11, 12.

There is need of prudence to the exercise of mercy and charity to the bodies of men. Not only for the management of our outward affairs with discretion, "that we may have to give to him that needeth," Eph. iv. 28. but to distinguish the most proper objects of charity, since we cannot reach all cases; and to proportion the measures of our bounty to the extent and importance of occasions: and in

in many cases to judge of the best methods effectually to reach the good end we propose.

Prudence is of equal use in the management of common conversation. To judge when it is fit to speak, and when to keep silence; to consider the different tempers, expectations and views of those with whom we converse, that we may avoid offence; and for directing us in other incidents of society without number. One instance must not be omitted, when we are speaking of christian prudence. We are commanded that "our discourse be good to the use of edifying," Eph. iv. 29. This plainly intimates, not only that we should be always careful lest any thing pass from us in conversation, which may tend to corrupt the minds of others; but also, that religious discourse, or that which directly tends to their spiritual good, should frequently be our theme in conversation. But wisdom is needful to direct in this matter. We should "not cast our pearls before swine," Mat. vii. 6. "nor speak in the ears of a fool," who will "despise the wisdom of our words," Prov. xxiii. 9. That will only furnish very loose people with a subject of mockery. There is also a happy dexterity to be used in accommodating serious discourse to different persons and seasons, if we would reach a good purpose by it; and a propriety to different occasions to be observed. The apostle gives us a direction of general service in this matter, Col. iv. 6. "Let your speech be always with grace," in the most grateful and acceptable manner you can; "seasoned with salt," the salt of wisdom and prudence, which

which may make it pleasant and beneficial to the hearers; "that ye may know to answer every man," that your answers may be well suited to the variety of persons and occasions, which are to be considered in them.

The like observations of the use of prudence might be carried into all the branches of duty, and the various stations and relations of life. But I shall enter no farther into particulars, rather chusing——

III. To offer something to enforce this exhortation from the description given in the text of the state of Christians in this world; that they are "as sheep in the midst of wolves." The devil as "a roaring lion seeks to devour;" and as an old serpent to seduce; and we should act with all the caution and wisdom we can to defeat him. But the danger suggested here, is principally from men.

Indeed good men are so imperfect in their goodness now, that we are not out of danger from them. Their society and example may have much ensnaring in it, which requires precaution for our own safety. But especially the number of bad men even in the best of times calls for much prudence to carry those who are truly good securely and creditably through their course of obedience. Such admonitions are always seasonable, Eph. v. 15, 16. "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Col. iv. 5. "Walk in wisdom toward those that are without, redeeming the time." Phil. ii. 15. "Be harmless and blameless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in-

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the midſt of a crooked and perverſe nation, among whom you ſhine as lights in the world." Many ill men are obſerving us, ever ready to triumph in the leaſt advantage they can gain againſt us, and to reproach our profeſſion upon that account. If they can find any thing to impeach our moral character, that would make us their reproach and their jeſt. The Pſalmiſt eſpecially deprecates this, Pſal. xxxix. 8. "Deliver me from all my tranſgreſſions; make me not the reproach of the fooliſh." "Lord, ſuffer me not to become their re-"proach by any real and notorious crimes." But in defect of them, they will gladly lay hold of imprudences to reproach religion and thoſe who pretend to it; and therefore we ſhould endeavour, as far as poſſible, to prevent their ill-natured ſatisfaction that way.

Let us then, laying aſide all the deceitful arts which are inconſiſtent with godly ſincerity, cultivate the wiſdom that is from above; all that may help forward the comfortable and ſucceſsful performance of our duty, and recommend our holy profeſſion. In matters of importance, and which admit of premeditation, let us deliberately conſult not only the matter of our duty, but the moſt acceptable and amiable manner of performing it; and endeavour to become maſters of an habitual furniture of prudence to direct us upon ſudden emergencies: that it may be our character, with the Wiſeman, to have our eyes in our head.

A growing acquaintance with the holy Scriptures will be of ſingular uſe to our improvement in prudent conduct by the way, as well

well as to our becoming wiſe unto ſalvation. The precepts, the hiſtories contained in thoſe heavenly oracles, carefully attended to, will be in this reſpect "a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths." The Proverbs of Solomon, and the pattern of Chriſt, ſhould eſpecially be ſtudied to this purpoſe. The bleſſed Jeſus was not only a pattern of ſpotleſs innocence, but a model of conſummate prudence; as "in him were hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge." He choſe the fitteſt means in all caſes to reach his ends; and took advantage of all occurrences to convey a word in ſeaſon to thoſe with whom he converſed, in the manner and at the times wherein his inſtructions were moſt apt to make impreſſion. When he ſhewed his charity to their bodies, in healing their diſeaſes, or in ſome other inſtances of compaſſion, he laid hold on ſuch happy opportunities to be a monitor alſo for their better intereſts. There are many inſtanſtances in the Goſpel-hiſtory of his pudent conduct for avoiding dangers, and the effects of his enemies malice, till his time was come; and of his wary anſwers to captious and enſnaring queſtions, whereby he either ſoftened the rage of his adverſaries, or evaded their wicked intentions. His followers may derive great light from a diligent obſervation of his behaviour attended with the various circumſtances.

The lives of wiſe and good men, of which there are many written for our uſe, may furniſh us with ſeveral profitable hints to make us wiſer as well as better. And eſpecially experience

rience will enable us to make a ſucceſsful progreſs in this needful ſkill, if we are but careful obſervers of men and things around us, and principally of ourſelves and our own conduct: Then *days will ſpeak, and* growing *years will teach wiſdom*; if we uſe ourſelves to recollect, where we have taken a wrong ſtep, that it may not be repeated; and where we have ſucceeded well, that we may be in a readineſs to conduct ourſelves in a like manner, if the ſame occaſions occur again. And along with our own care, from a ſenſe of the many imprudencies to which we are liable, and of the various unforeſeen trials which we can hardly be provided for by any precautions of our own, *let us* daily *aſk wiſdom of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not.* The conſtant guidance and conduct of the all-wiſe and holy God, will be our beſt ſecurity through a dangerous world, and will bring us to glory at the end of life.

"I pray" therefore "that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding; that ye may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work, and increaſing in the knowledge of God."

THE END.

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